

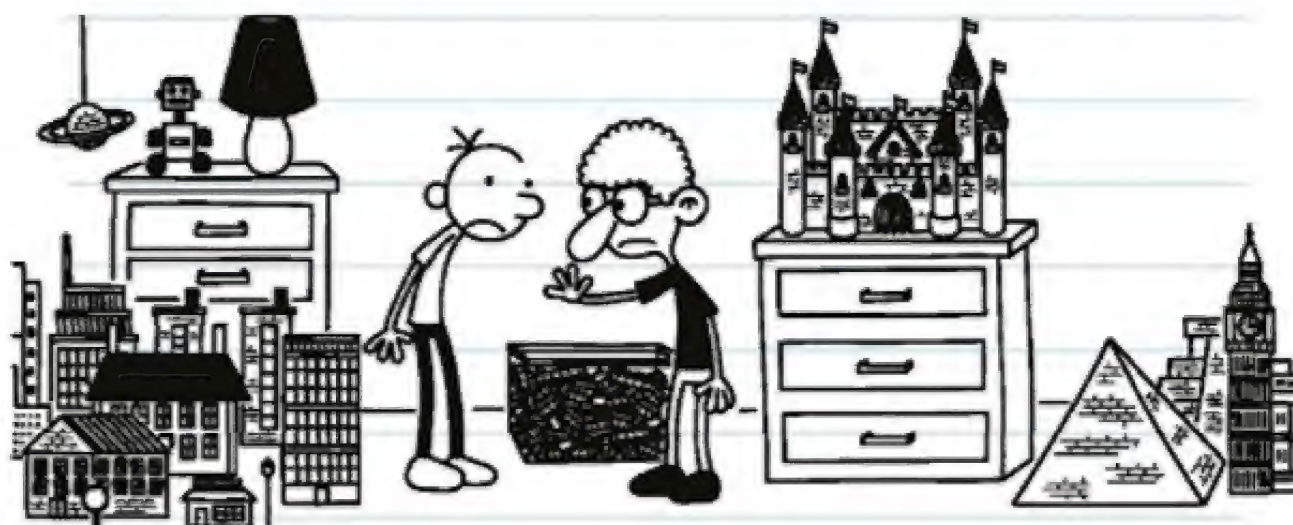
I asked Maddox what he does for fun, and he said he either practices his violin or plays with his Legos. I was pretty relieved to hear that he actually had some TOYS, because I was starting to wonder about this kid.

But when he showed me what he had in his bedroom, I was totally blown away.

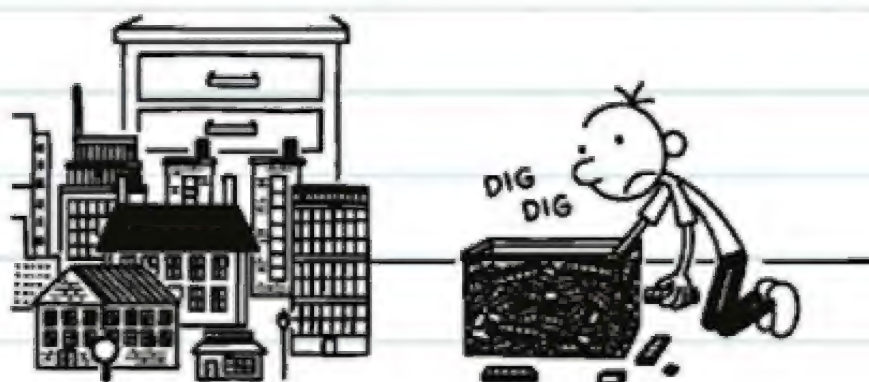


He had a whole Lego CITY in there. Maddox said he wants to be an engineer when he grows up, and whenever he asks for a Lego set, his mom buys it for him. All I can say is, she must have spent a FORTUNE.

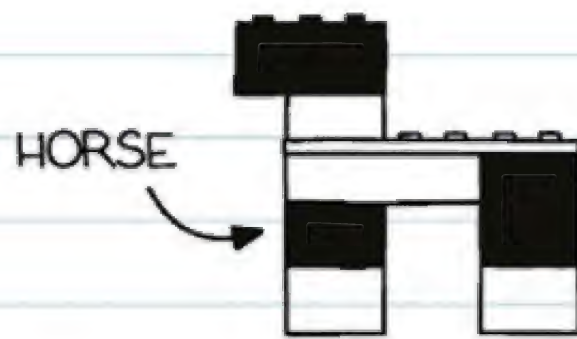
I wanted to play with some of the big sets Maddox had, but he wouldn't let me go anywhere NEAR them.



He told me if I wanted to play with his Legos, I could use the pieces from his "leftovers" bin. That was a pretty big letdown, because the leftovers bin was filled with a bunch of random pieces.

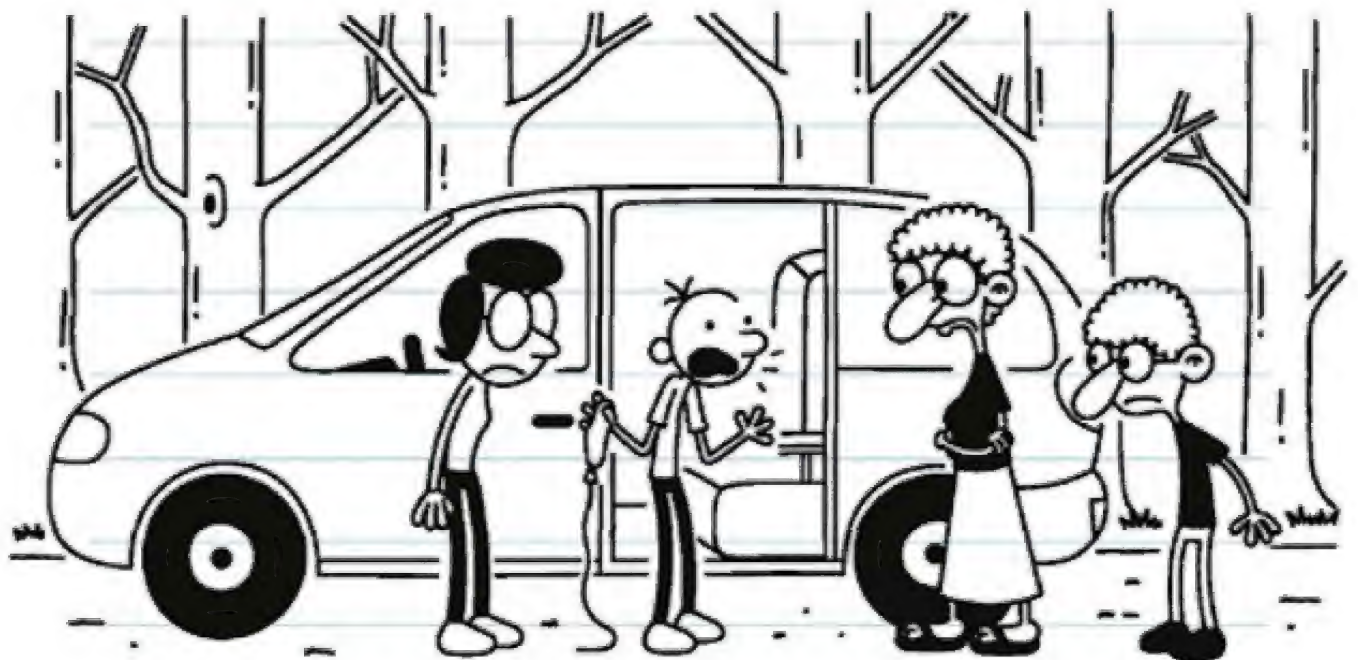


So while Maddox was putting together a 500-piece Lego spaceship, I did the best with what I had.



After about an hour and a half, Mom and Mrs. Selsam finally came back. Luckily, my balloon was sitting on the little table next to the front door, so I grabbed it on the way out.

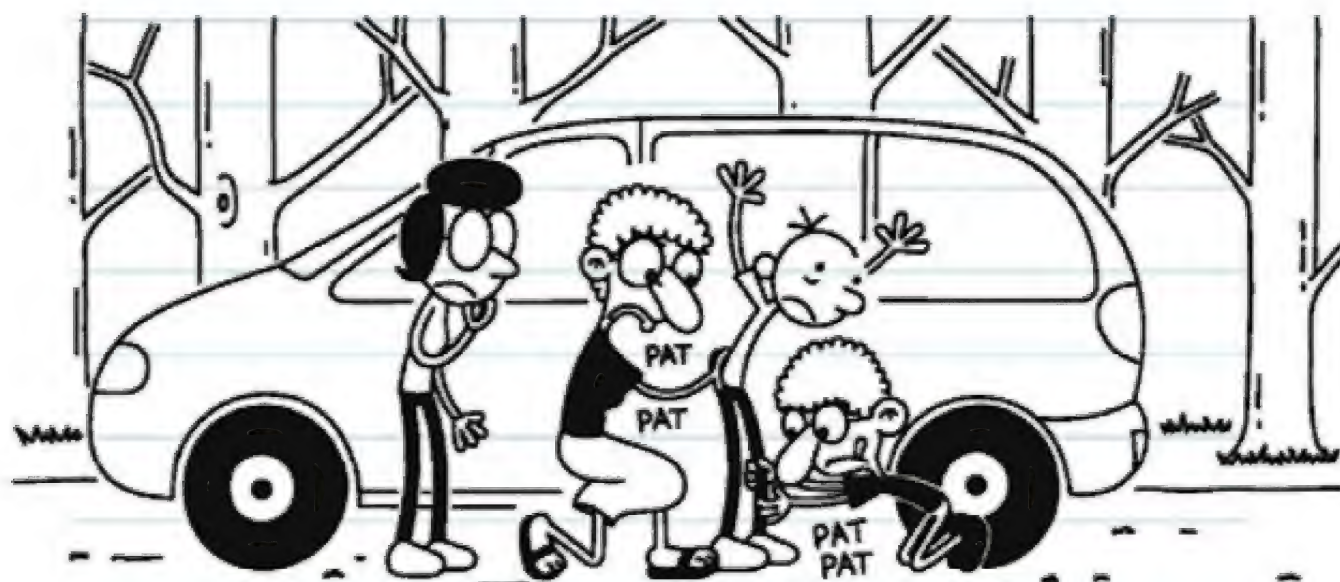
But just when I was about to get in the car, Mrs. Selsam came running out with Maddox right behind her. Maddox said I "stole" from him. I tried to explain that the balloon was actually MINE, and I was just taking it BACK.



But Maddox wasn't talking about the BALLOON. He said I stole one of his LEGOS. Apparently one of the pieces was missing from his leftovers bin. And don't even ask me how he knew THAT.

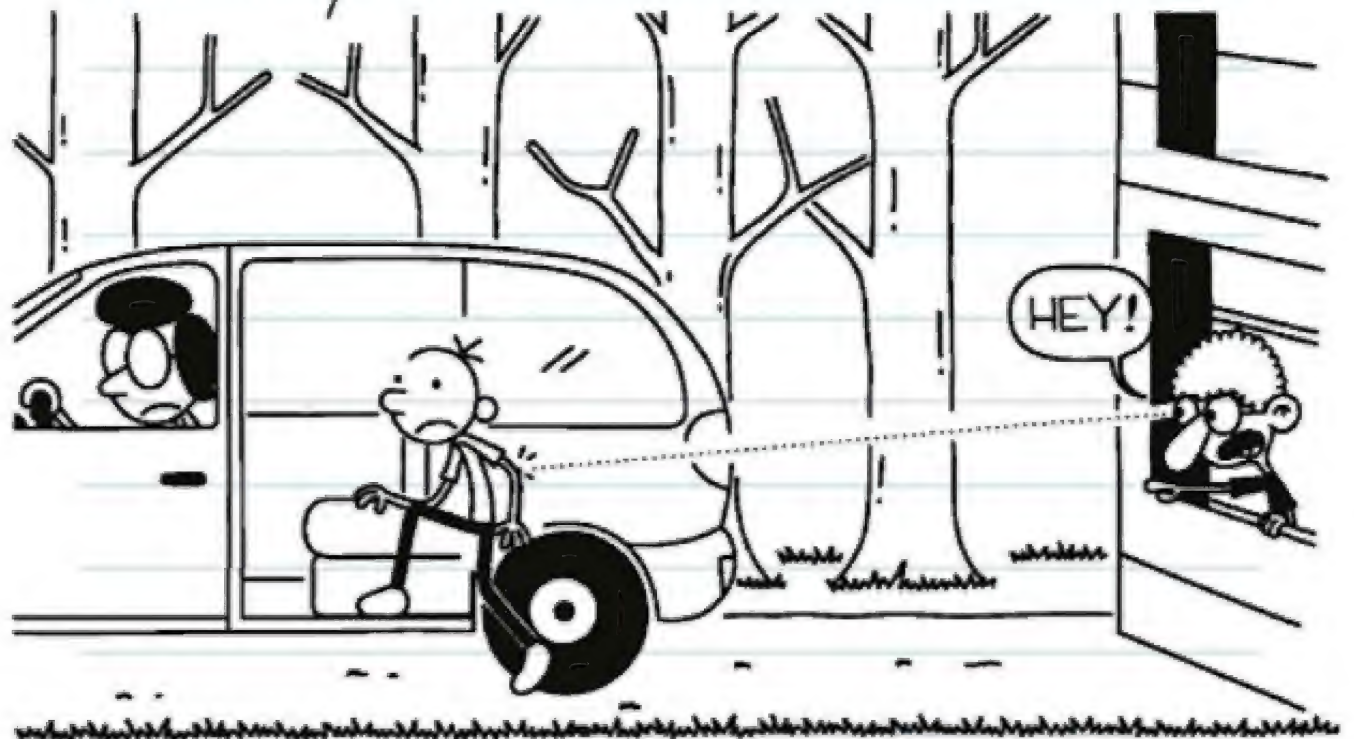
I swore up and down I didn't take any of his Legos, and I even turned my pockets inside out to prove it. But he STILL wasn't satisfied.

So I actually let Maddox and Mrs. Selsam pat me down, which was totally humiliating. But I gotta admit it was pretty satisfying when they couldn't find anything on me.

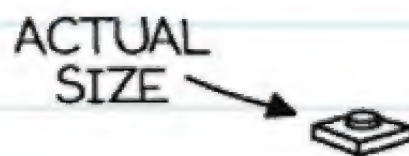


After that I thought I was in the clear, and I turned to get in the car.

That's when Maddox spotted a Lego that was stuck to my elbow.



What really stinks is that it was one of those tiny square pieces, and I'm sure Maddox had a BILLION of those in his leftovers bin.



Anyway, that's how our "playdate" ended.

On a positive note, I got what I came for. But on the way home, Mom seemed pretty upset. I thought she was mad about the Lego piece, but she wasn't.

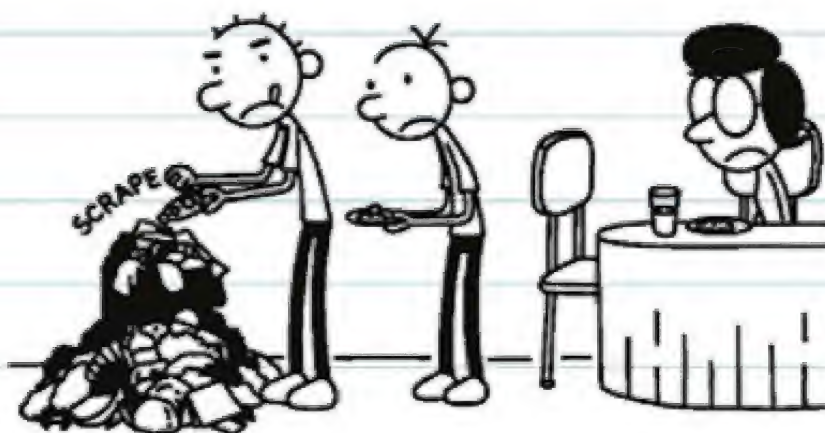
She said she was disappointed I didn't hit it off with Maddox, because she thought he was a good "role model" for me.



But if Mom wants to connect me with someone I'll actually look UP to, she's gonna have to try a little harder.

Monday

For the past few days, Mom's been doing an experiment on me and Rodrick. She wanted to see how long we'd go before one of us would take out the trash without being told. But I guess we failed the test, because last night she gave up.



At dinner, Mom said she didn't go to college just so she could spend her time cleaning up after everyone and scraping gum off our shoes. She said she needed to be in a "stimulating environment" and was going back to school full-time to finish her master's degree.

She said that for this to work, everyone's gonna have to pitch in extra around the house. So to make chores "fun," she created a "Grab Bag," which is a pillowcase filled with little slips of paper that have random jobs written down on them.

I'm pretty sure she got the idea from "Family Frolic" magazine.



Me and Rodrick are supposed to reach into the Grab Bag every day after school and do a chore.

Mom told us that if we do our chores, she'll let us dip into the Halloween candy a little early.

Well, that's proof it's SOMEWHERE in the house. But that's just gonna be BONUS candy for me, because today at school I traded in my balloon for that big jar of candy corn in Vice Principal Roy's office. And as soon as I got home, I hid it in the bottom drawer of my dresser so I didn't have to share it with anyone.

After that was taken care of, I reached into the Grab Bag and pulled out a slip of paper and got "Polish the Silverware," which has to be the worst chore in there.



Rodrick must have added his OWN items to the Grab Bag, because I found him asleep next to a slip of paper with his handwriting on it.



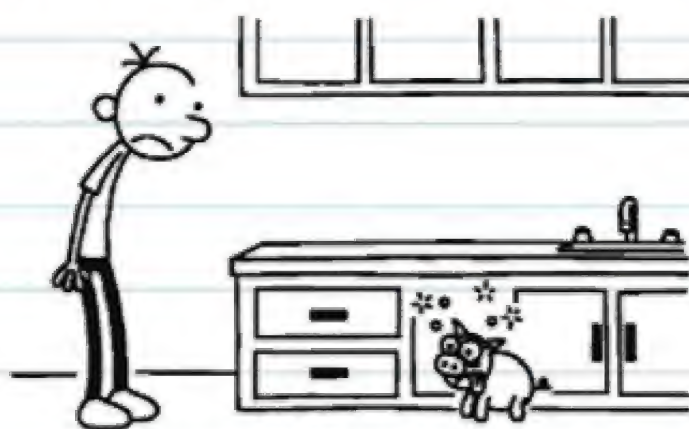
I decided to help myself to some candy corn as a reward for finishing my chore, but when I walked into my room, my bottom drawer was open and the jar was EMPTY.



It didn't take me long to find the culprit. I found the pig stumbling around the kitchen like it was drunk or something.

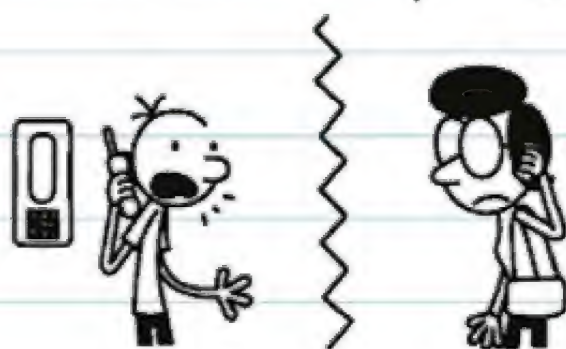
At first I was mad, because not only did the pig eat all my candy corn, but it somehow figured out how to unscrew the jar to do it.

Then I started getting kind of WORRIED, because the pig really didn't look so good.



I figured Grandpa might know what to do, but he was out on a date with Mrs. Fredericks. I woke Rodrick up and asked HIM what to do, and he said I should call Dad. So I did, but Dad was in a meeting.

I didn't want to bother Mom, because I knew she was at her college signing up for classes. But the pig was turning green, so I called her anyway. I told her that the pig seemed pretty sick, and she asked me if it had eaten anything strange.



I really didn't wanna tell her it had gotten into my candy corn, so I told her I wasn't sure. She said we'd better take the pig to the vet just in case, and that she was leaving school and would meet us there.

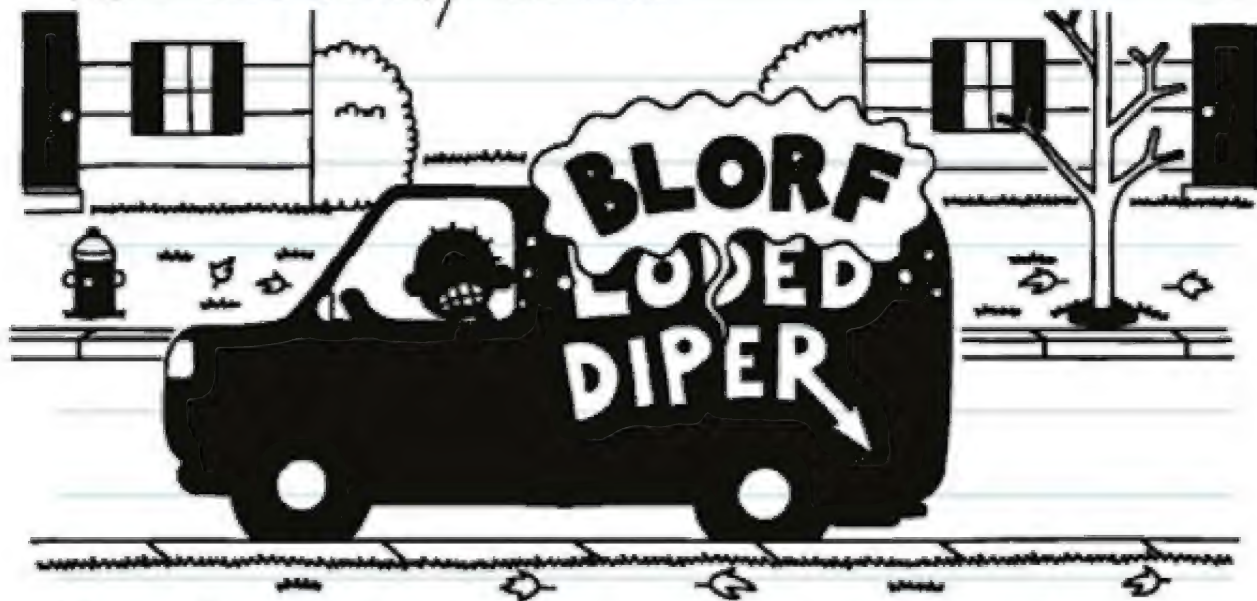
Rodrick wasn't happy I was waking him up for the second time in five minutes, but one look at the pig convinced him we needed to get moving.



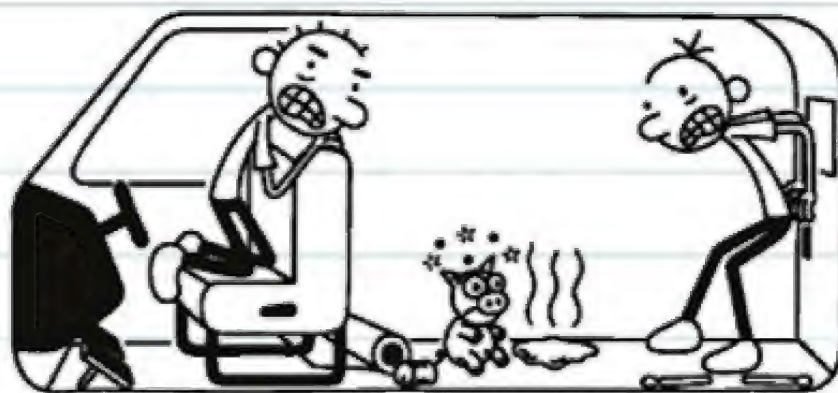
On the ride over, I held the pig in my arms in the back of Rodrick's van. But halfway to the vet the pig started making weird sounds.



I told Rodrick to pull over, but by the time he did it was already too late.



Now there was a giant, gooey, orange-and-yellow puddle on the floor of Rodrick's van. And I'm pretty sure I'll never be able to look at candy corn the same way again.

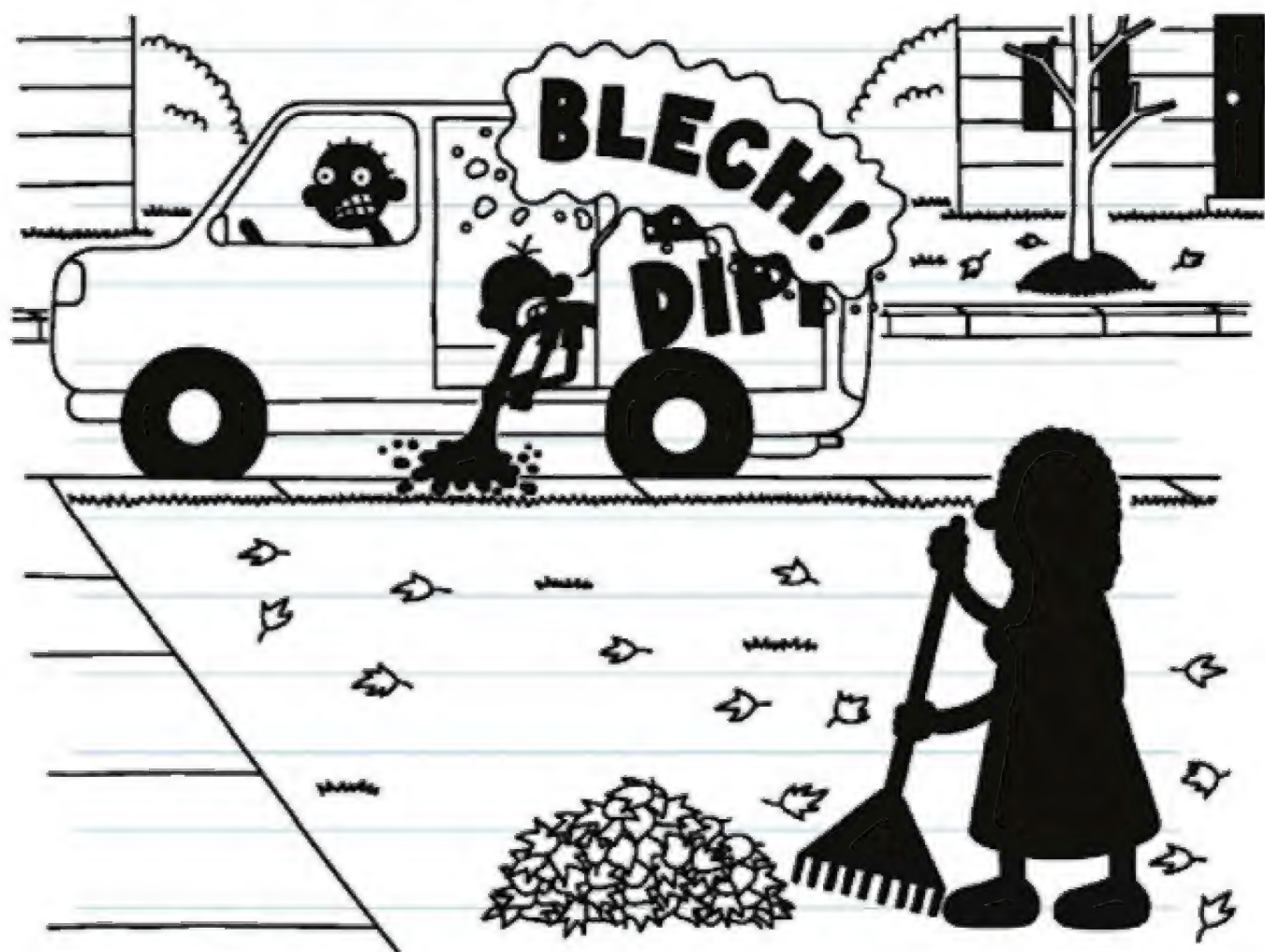


Rodrick said it was my fault for making the pig sick, so it was MY job to clean it up. Then he handed me a roll of paper towels and told me to get to work.

Even though the puddle was candy corn, it didn't SMELL like it. I tried mopping it up while holding my breath, but it was hopeless.

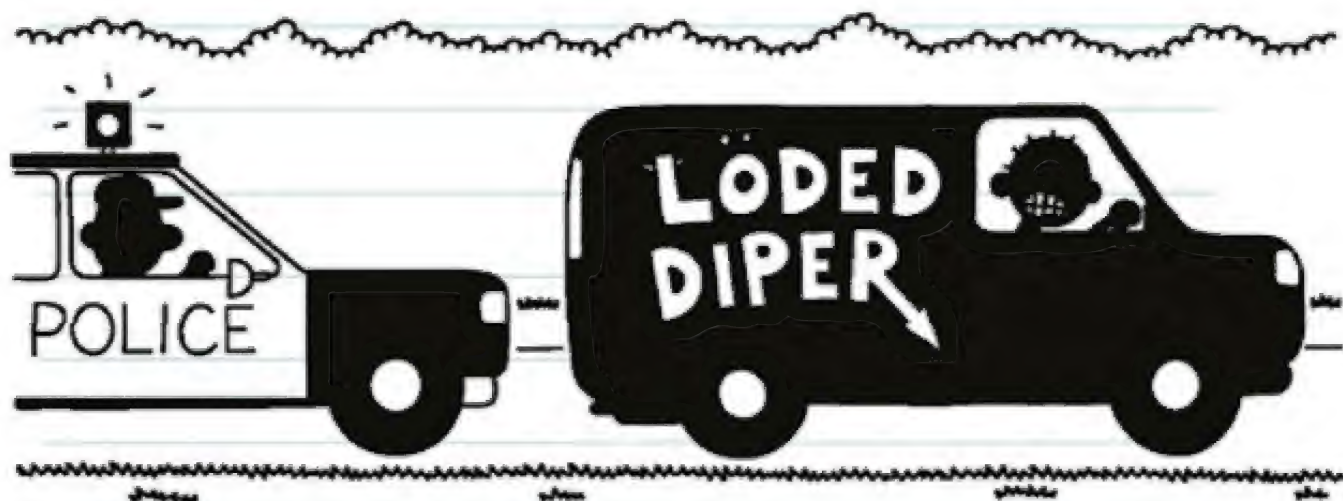
Finally I couldn't take it anymore and realized I was gonna get sick MYSELF. Fortunately, I was able to get out of the van in time.

UNFORTUNATELY, the lady whose yard we were parked in front of was outside raking leaves and saw the whole thing.



I guess she thought we were a couple of bad kids and this was some kind of juvenile prank, because she said she was calling the COPS.

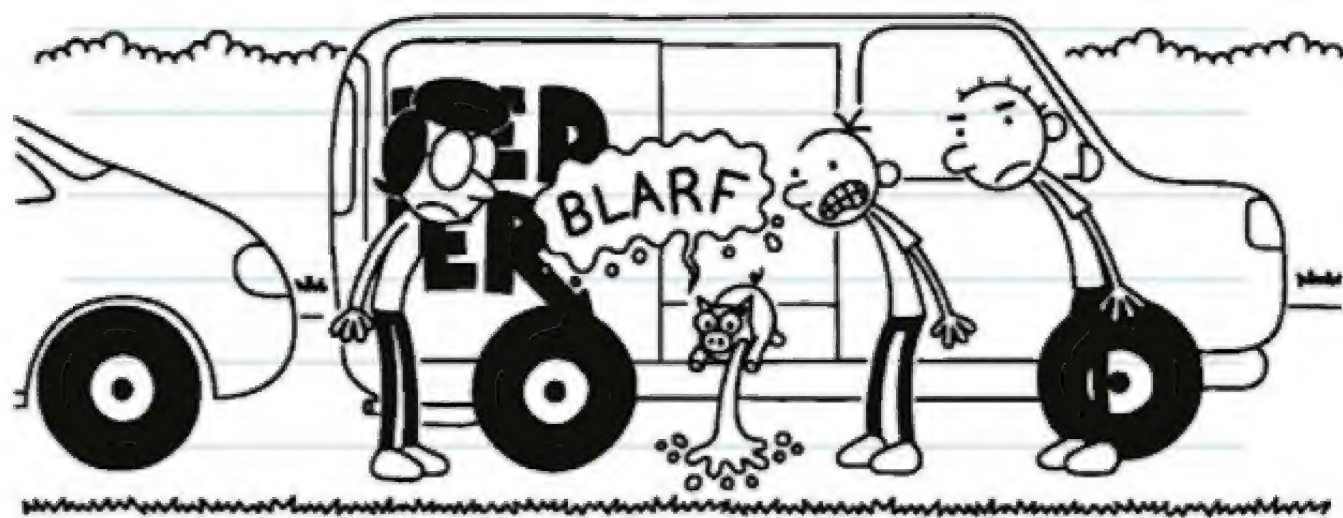
So I got back in the van and we peeled out of there as fast as we could and turned on to the highway. But we didn't get far.



Luckily, I was able to explain everything to the police officer, but he didn't seem to want to hear all the details.



Just after the cop drove away, Mom spotted Rodrick's van on the highway and pulled in behind us. And I guess the pig hadn't totally emptied out yet, because it coughed up one last puddle of candy corn.



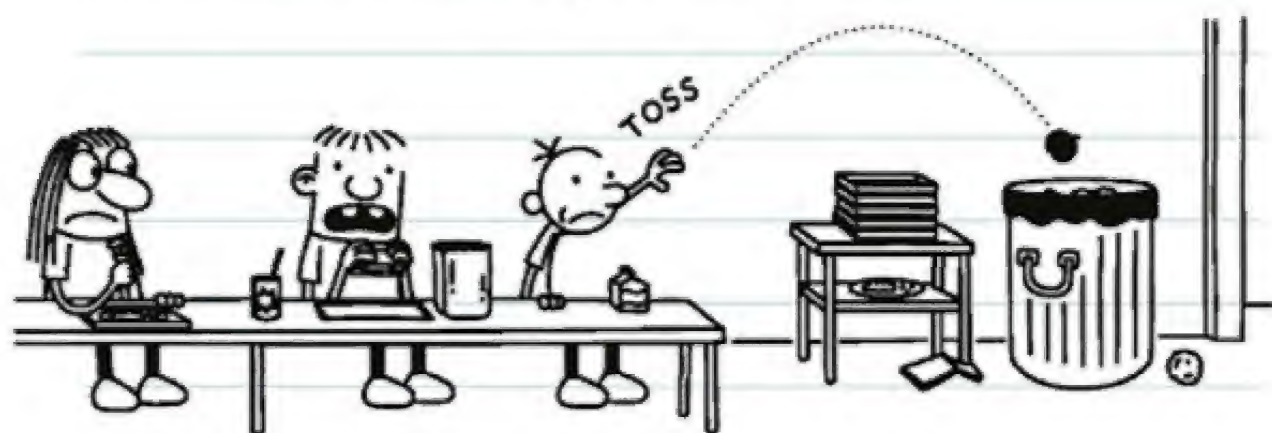
Tuesday

Last night when we got home, Mom said she wasn't mad at me, she was **DISAPPOINTED**. And when it comes to Mom, that's even **WORSE**.

She said she's disturbed by my "pattern of deception," and that between the incident at Maddox's house and what happened with the pig, she didn't feel like I could be trusted. I explained for the millionth time that the Lego thing was just a misunderstanding, but she'd obviously already made up her mind about that one.

The last time we had a conversation like this was when I was in the fourth grade, and I'll admit I totally deserved a punishment that time around.

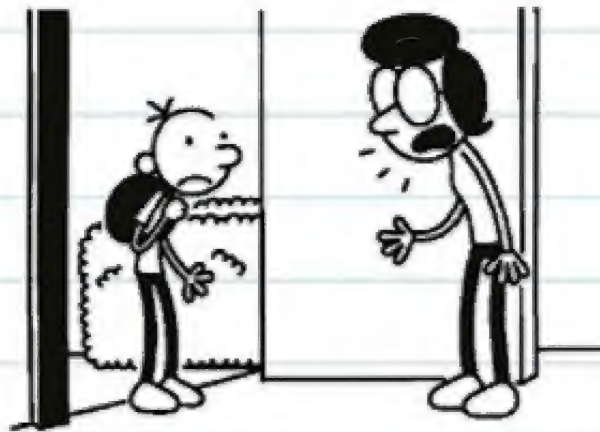
It actually started with something kind of small. Mom used to pack my lunch every morning, and I'd always eat my sandwich and snack but toss whatever fruit she'd put in there.



Mom figured out I wasn't eating my fruit, so one day she put an apple in my lunch and made me promise to bring the core home to prove I'd eaten it. She said if I DIDN'T, she wouldn't pack a snack for me anymore.

At lunch I forgot all about my promise, and I threw my fruit away like usual.

And when I got home, Mom asked me where my apple core was.



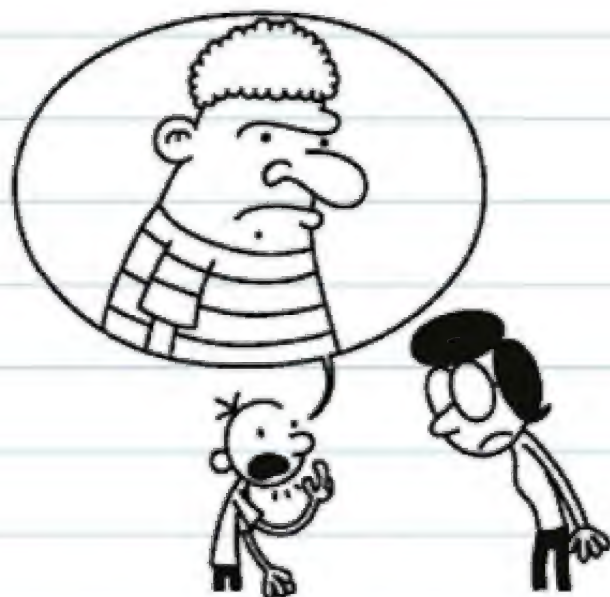
I probably should've just come clean, but for some reason I made up a lie. I told her that on the way to school that morning, a bully grabbed me and stole my apple.



It was a pretty desperate move on my part, but I was worried Mom wasn't gonna give me a snack the next day if I told her the truth.

I thought my story was so lame that Mom would see right through it. But she wanted to know more about this bully, so I really let it rip.

I told her the kid's name was Curtis Litz and that he was a foot taller than me, with a unibrow, and a mole on his chin. I figured if Mom was looking for DETAILS, I wasn't gonna disappoint her.



Mom said she could step in, but this was a good opportunity for me to learn how to settle a conflict on my OWN.

So that night she brought me a pen and paper and had me write Curtis a letter, which I did.

Dear Curtis,

Please don't take
my apple again. My
mom says I need it
for my nutrition.

Sincerely,

Greg Heffley

I probably should've just ended it right then.
But I wrote a fake letter to myself from Curtis
instead. And to make sure Mom could see how
BAD this kid was, I added a rude drawing at
the end.

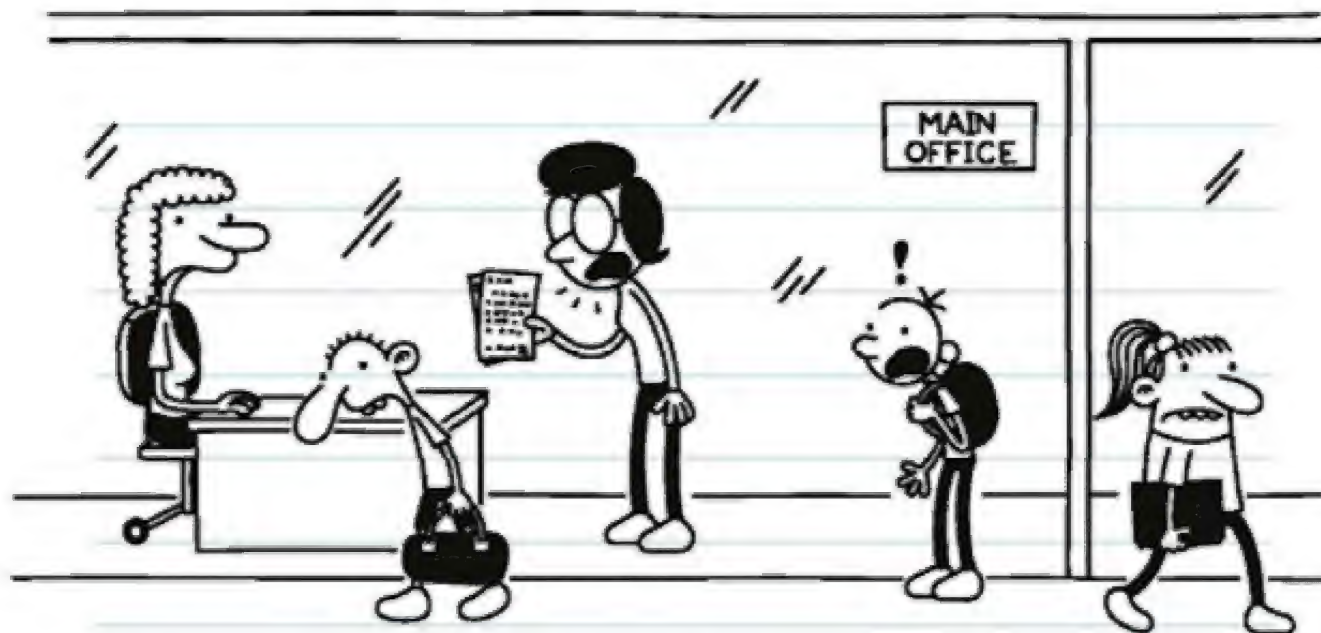
DEAR GREGORY,
YOUR APPLE WAS
DELICIOUS. TELL
YOUR MOMMY TO
SEND ME ANOTHER
ONE TOMORROW.

FROM CURTIS



A BUTT

Well, I guess I took it too far, because the next day Mom came to school with that letter, demanding to speak to Curtis Litz.



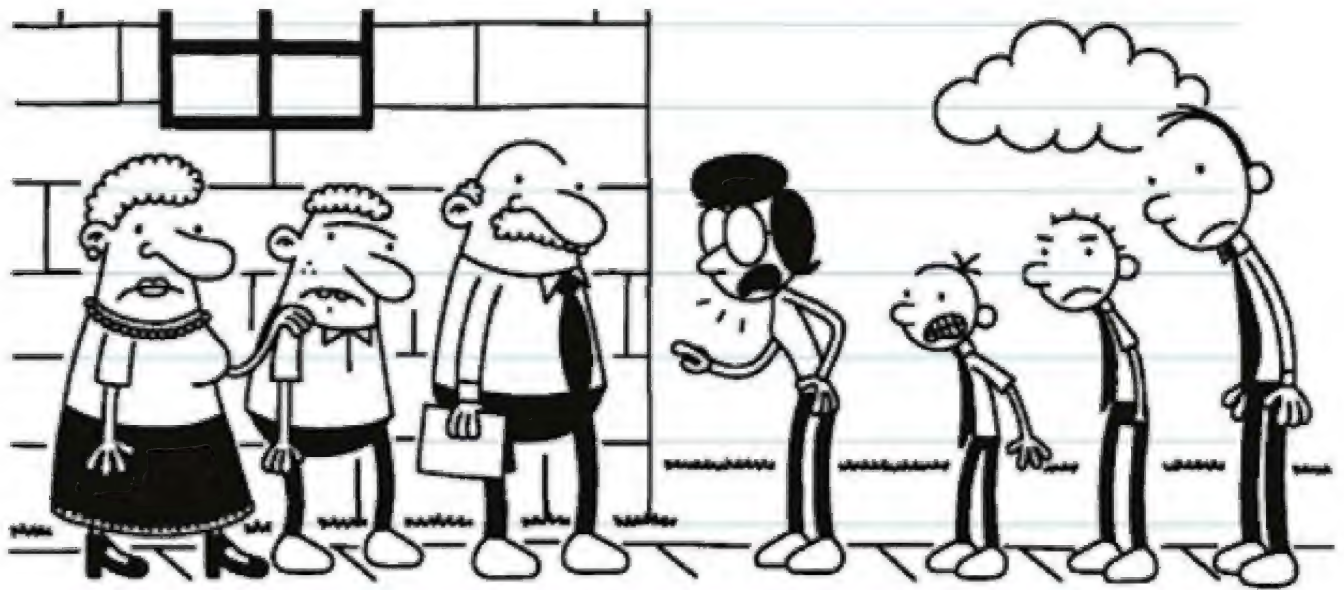
The secretary told Mom there was no student named Curtis Litz at the school, and when Mom asked me about him I said he must be homeschooled.

After that I got kind of nervous, and for the next two weeks I had Rowley eat my apple at lunch and give me the core.



Mom seemed to forget all about it until we sat a row behind the Bartlemans at church one weekend. Their fifth-grade son, Tevin, looked just like my description of Curtis Litz, and he caught Mom's eye.

Mom told Tevin's parents they're raising a rotten kid and that they owed her some apples. I felt pretty bad, because Tevin Bartleman is a nice kid and his family volunteers at the soup kitchen downtown every Saturday morning.



Later on in the year Mom joined the Fundraising Committee, which was headed up by Mrs. Bartleman. It didn't take long for Mom to figure things out from there, and I lost TV privileges for a whole month as punishment.

But I actually ended up getting a DOUBLE punishment, because for the rest of that year, every time Tevin saw me in the hallway, he really let me have it.



Last night Mom decided that my punishment for lying was for me to take THREE chores out of the Grab Bag every day this week.

Unfortunately, she already cleared out all of Rodrick's slips of paper, which means there's no chance I'll get an easy one.

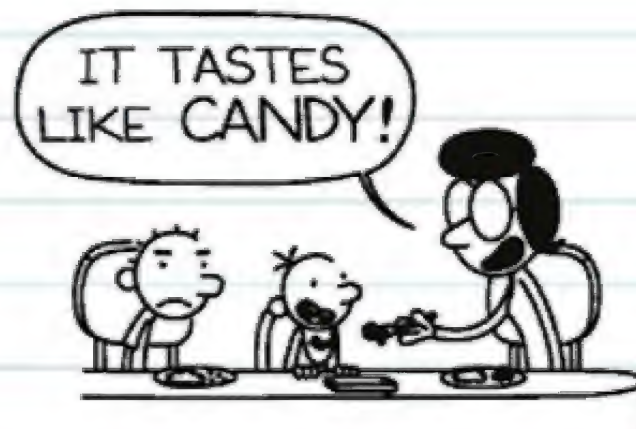
**EAT SOME
ICE CREAM.**

When we wrapped up our conversation last night, Mom said I'm a smart kid with a good imagination, but I just need to DO something with it.

Listen, I'm not proud of myself for lying, but trust me, I'm not the ONLY one in this family who bends the truth.

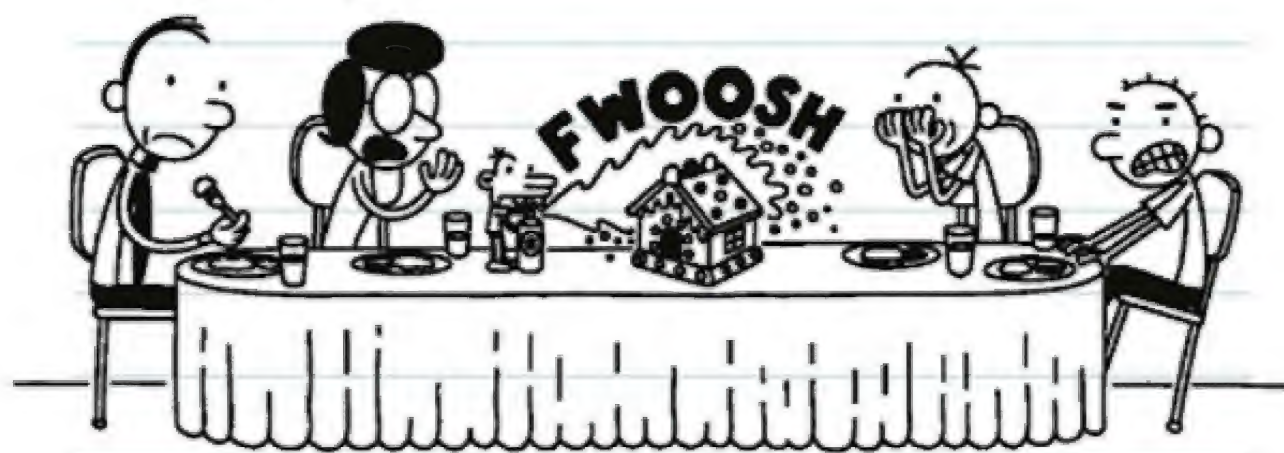
I've heard grown-ups lie ten times a week, but if you ask me I'll bet it's even MORE than that.

The first time I remember Mom telling me a lie was when I was about three years old and she had me try broccoli.



And Mom doesn't seem to have any problem lying to MANNY, either.

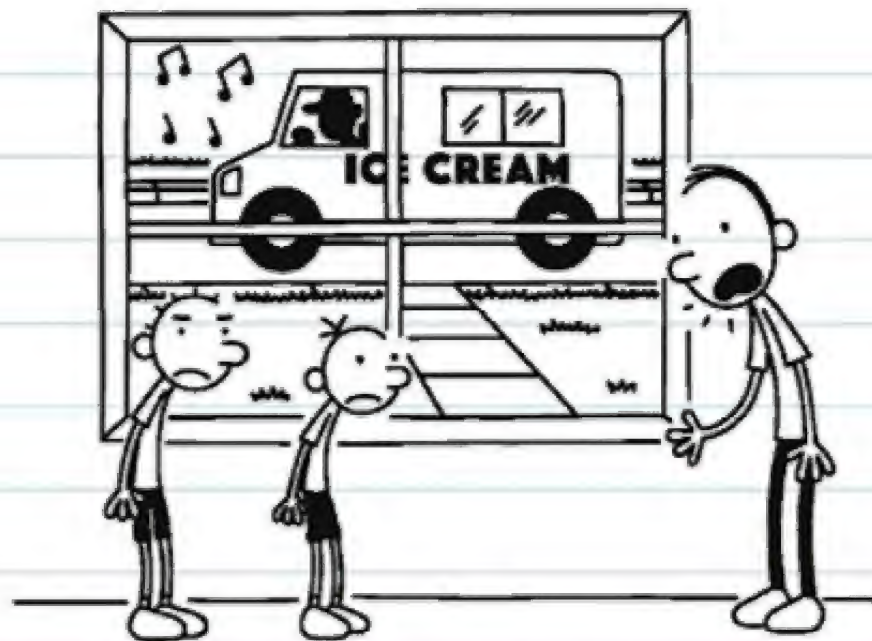
Last December, when Mom put the gingerbread house out on the kitchen table, she told Manny not to touch it until Christmas or it would turn into a million spiders, which is kind of a crazy thing to tell a little kid. But it backfired when Manny fumigated the gingerbread house with a can of bug spray.



Dad's a pretty honest guy in general, but even HE fibs when it's convenient for him.

Dad used to HATE it when the ice cream truck came through our neighborhood, because me and Rodrick would always start begging him for money as soon as we heard the music.

So Dad told us the ice cream truck only plays music when they're OUT of ice cream.

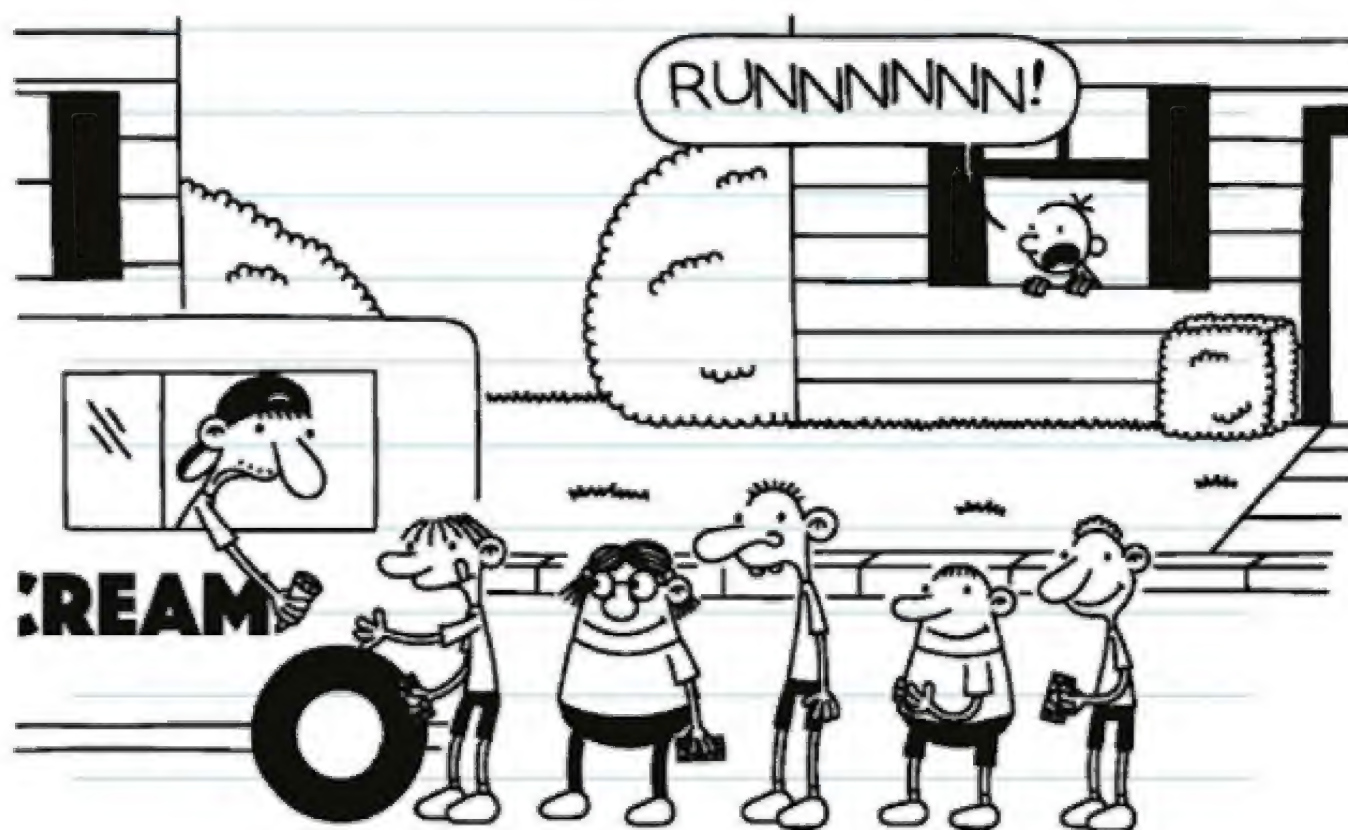


I actually think lying might be inherited, because GRANDPA does it, too. But he should've gotten his stories straight with Dad, because Grandpa used to say the ice cream truck driver was a clown who spanked children he caught roaming around outside.



I'm kind of embarrassed to say that when Grandpa first told me that, I actually BELIEVED him.

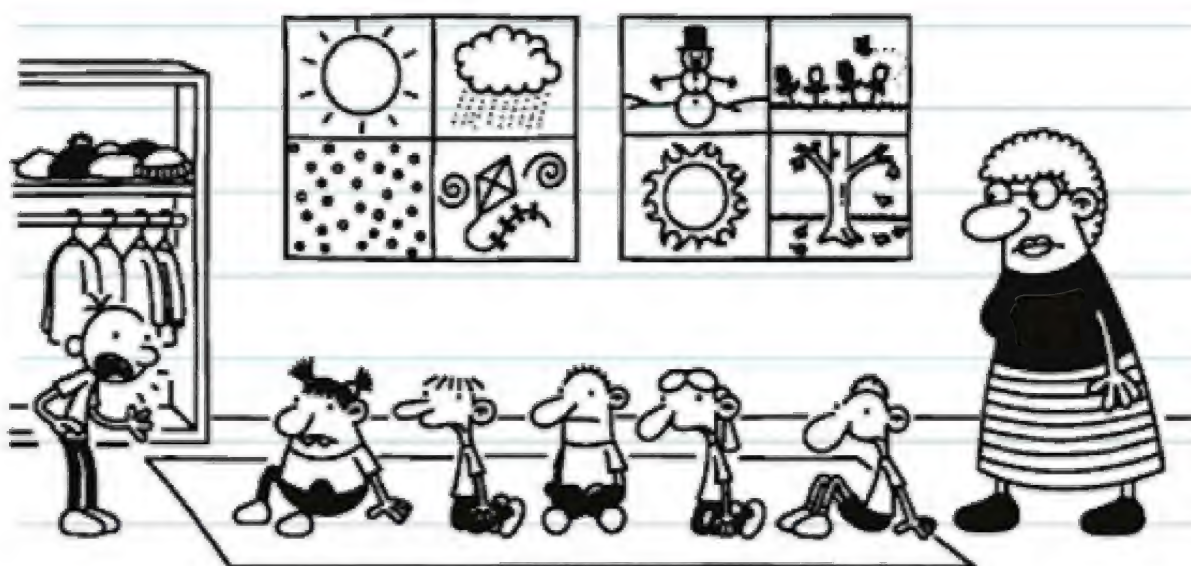
So I felt like it was my responsibility to get the word out to OTHER kids in the neighborhood.



I've learned not to trust the grown-ups in our family, but nobody's done more to mess with my head than RODRICK.

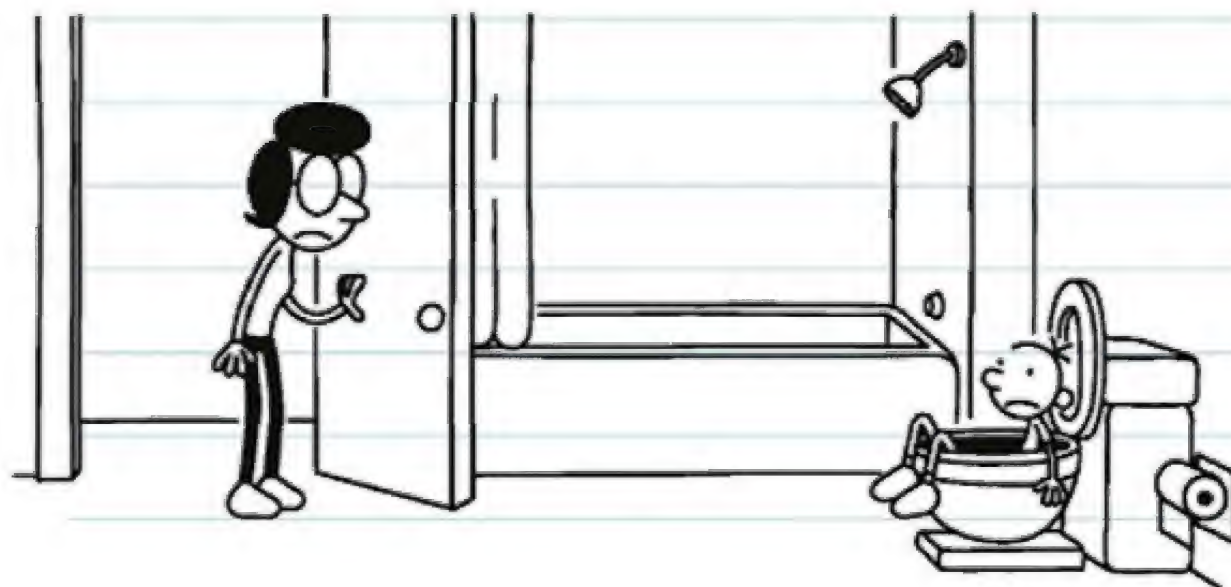
The first lie I can remember him telling me was that if your belly button got untied, your BUTT would fall off.

I made sure my preschool classmates knew about that, which caused a big stir at school.



Right around this same time Rodrick told me that the outer ring of the toilet seat was only used by girls, and that guys are supposed to lift the seat no matter WHAT.

I believed him, and if I hadn't accidentally left the door unlocked one night, I might've gone on using the toilet the wrong way for the rest of my life.



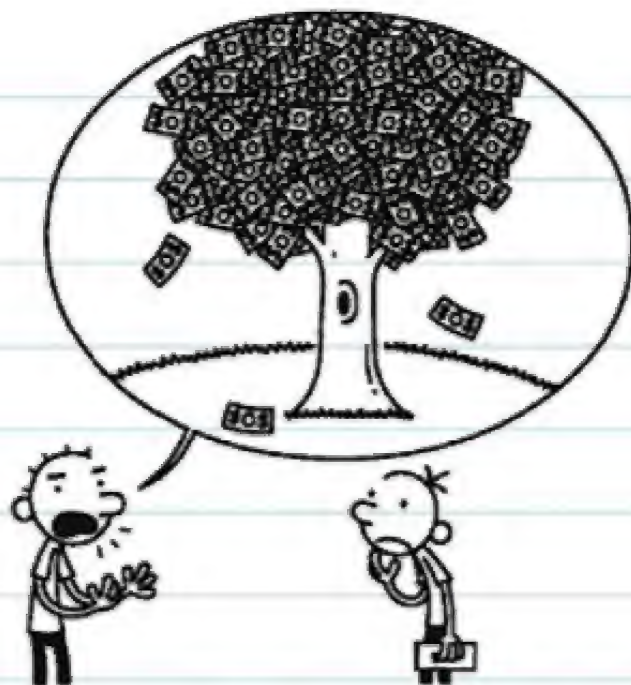
Sometimes Rodrick told me things that got me in BIG trouble. When I was in second grade he said that if a person wears camouflage, they're actually INVISIBLE to everyone else.

That one got me banned from the town pool for the rest of the summer.



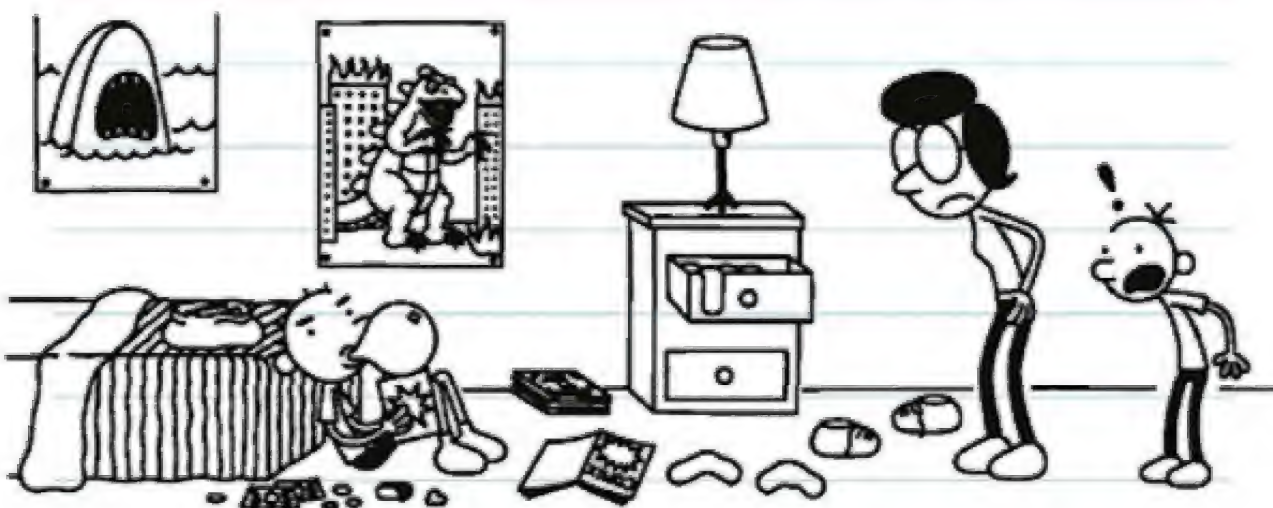
A lot of Rodrick's lies ended up costing me MONEY, too. One year Rodrick told me that if I dug a hole and put all my birthday money in it, a tree would grow and I could get cash from it whenever I WANTED.

That seemed like a pretty sweet deal to ME.



So I did what he said, and I even watered it twice a day. But when I told Mom my Money Tree wasn't growing, she got a shovel and dug up the hole, which was EMPTY.

I'm glad Mom stepped in when she did, because in another day or two all of my birthday money would've been spent on bubble gum and comic books.



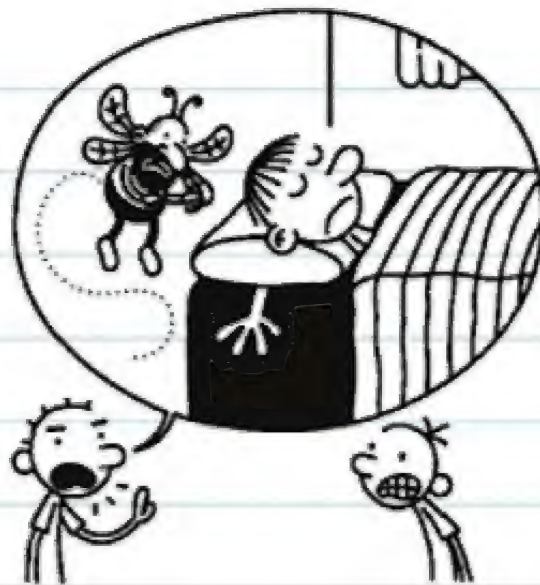
Sometimes Rodrick just took my money outright.

Once, when I lost one of my baby teeth, I put it under my pillow for the tooth fairy. But when I went to see if she left me fifty cents, I found a note that I'm pretty sure Rodrick wrote himself.

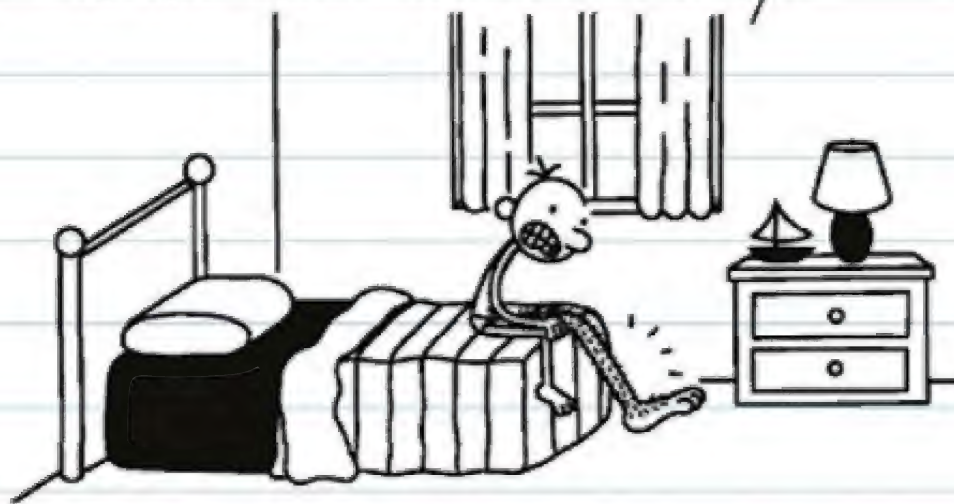
SORRY I'M LIGHT ON
CASH TONIGHT. I
WILL HOOK YOU UP
NEXT TIME.
-T.F.

Rodrick told me the tooth fairy was only ONE of the fairies that comes in the middle of the night and gives money. He said there was an arm fairy and a leg fairy and a bunch of other ones, too.

Rodrick said that when you get older your child arms and legs fall off, and when they do, you put them under your pillow and get money.



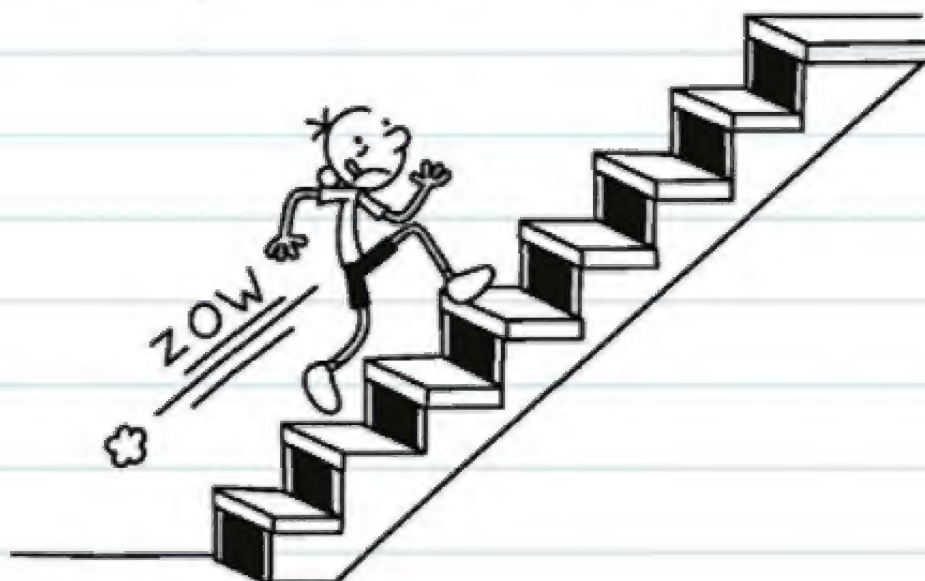
He said after THAT, your adult limbs start growing in, but sometimes a kid's arms or legs get loose and the adult ones come in early.



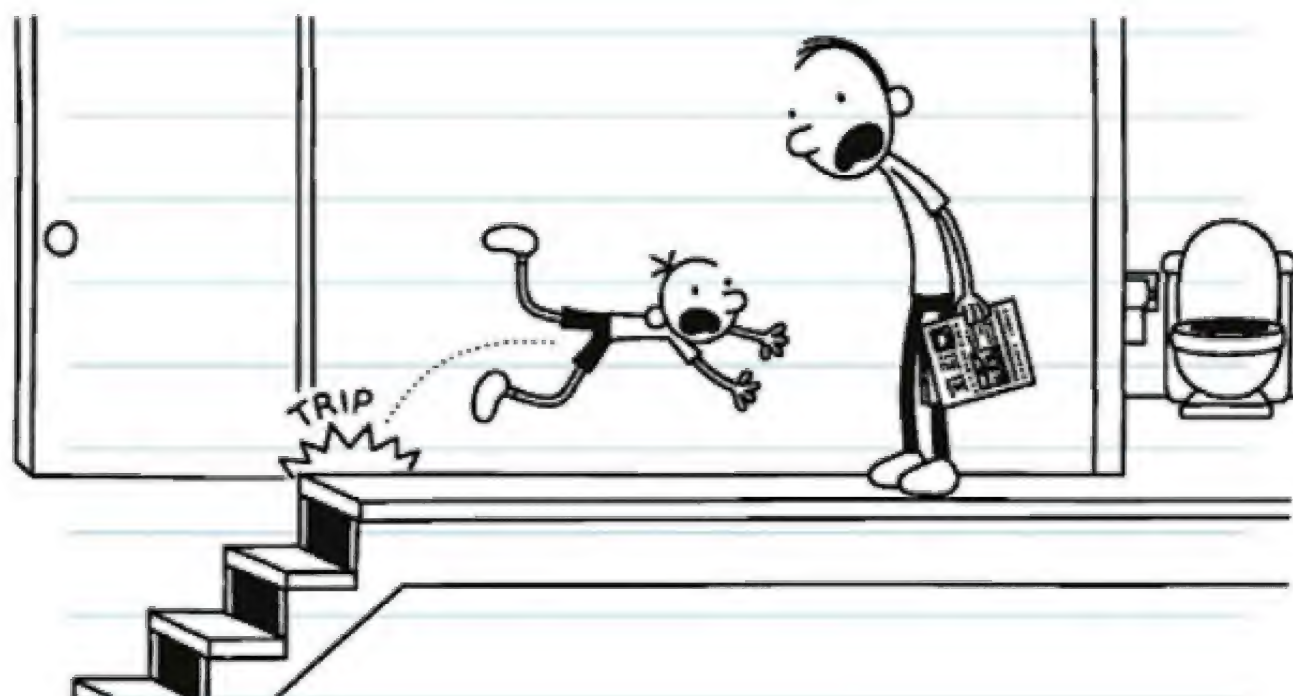
I was TERRIFIED that was gonna happen to ME, so I checked every night to make sure my arms and legs were on tight.

Rodrick was always coming up with ways to scare me. Back when our basement wasn't finished, there were open gaps under the stair treads.

Rodrick said if I went up the stairs too slow, a monster would grab my ankle. From then on, I started taking the stairs two at a time.



After I got good at THAT, I tried taking the stairs THREE at a time. But I guess that was a little too ambitious.



Eventually we finished the basement and the gaps were covered up with wood. But GRAMMA'S basement is still unfinished, and before I go down there I usually make sure everything's all clear first.



Another thing Rodrick said to scare me was that if I burped indoors, the ghost of George Washington would haunt me. I have no idea how he came up with THAT one, but it still makes me think twice before opening a can of soda.



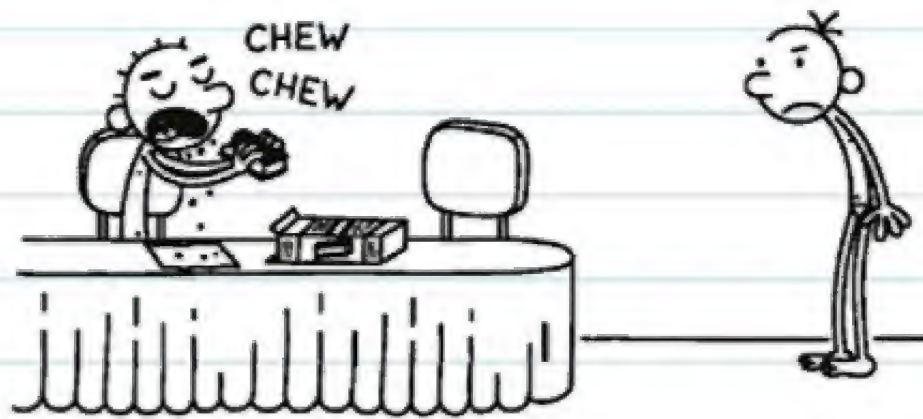
Sometimes Rodrick would tell me something that actually COULD be true, and that's when things got confusing.

He told me once that if a person sleeps with their mouth open they'll eat an average of five spiders a night, which is kind of believable if you think about it.



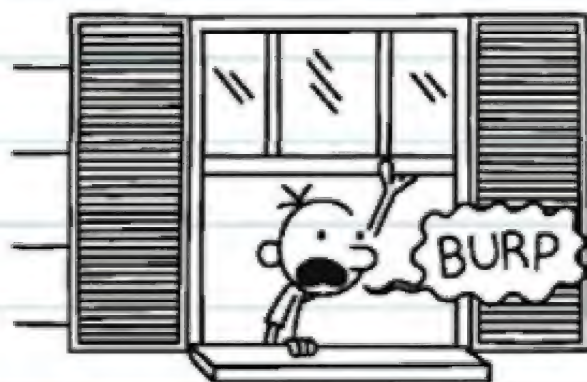
Another time Rodrick told me that it's dangerous to wake someone up when they're sleepwalking. I thought there could be a chance he was actually telling the truth, because I'm pretty sure I heard that one somewhere else.

But then a few nights later I caught Rodrick eating an ice cream sandwich that was supposed to be MINE and I realized it was just another one of his dirty tricks.



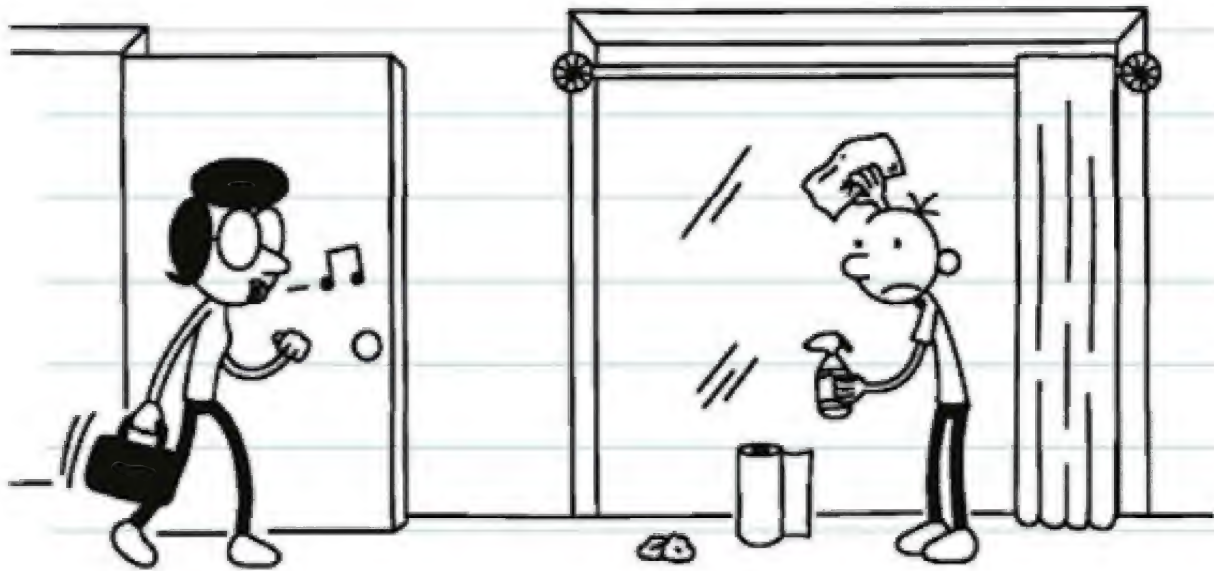
I've been lied to so much over the years, it could take me the rest of my life to figure out what's true and what's not.

In the meantime, I'm not taking any chances.



Thursday

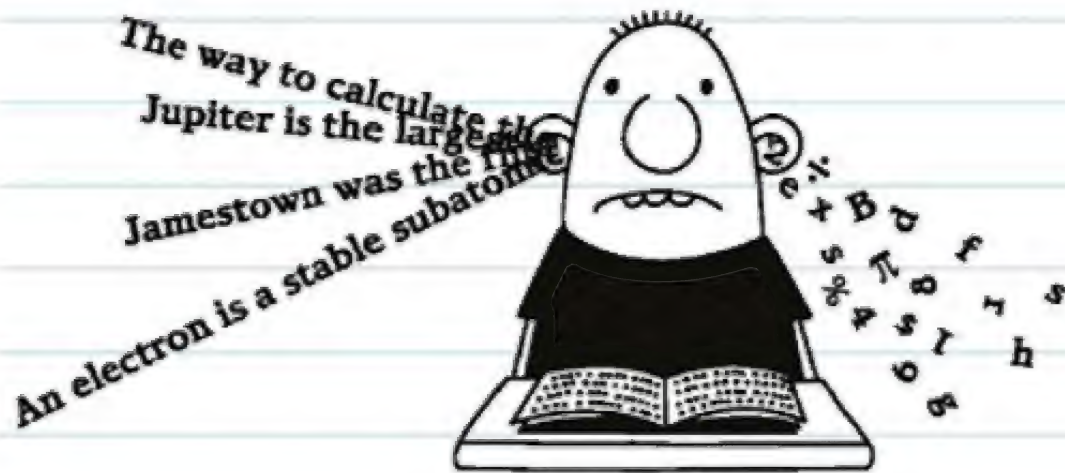
Mom's only been going to school for a few days now, but she's acting like a COMPLETELY different person. When she gets home at night, she's always in a good mood. She doesn't even get mad if I haven't finished my chores.



Mom says she's happy because she's being challenged at school, and the rest of us should try learning new things, too.

But I have a theory when it comes to this sort of thing. I figure your brain only has so much space in it, and by the time you're eight or nine years old, it's all filled up.

So if you want to learn something new after THAT, you have to make room by getting rid of something OLD.



I figure that's why school gets harder the further you go. Every time new information comes in, your brain automatically clears out something ELSE to make space.

To prove my point, ever since I learned about photosynthesis in Science, I haven't been able to remember how to do long division.

Question 1: What is 367 divided by 12?
Remember to show your work!

NO
CLUE.

I just wish you could CHOOSE what your brain gets rid of. I've completely forgotten the cheat codes for Twisted Wizard, but I still have a really clear memory of the time I scared Dad when he came out of the shower.

And believe me, I'd pay good money to wipe THAT image from my memory bank.



Mom says me and Rodrick need to start thinking about what we want to do when we grow up and start planning for the future NOW. She says when you're a kid you should do as many things as you can to find out what you like so that later you'll know what to focus on.

I already KNOW what I want to do for my career. I'm planning on being a video game tester when I grow up. The way I see it, I've been training for that job ever since I was old enough to hold a controller in my hands.

But whenever I tell Mom my plan, she doesn't seem excited about it.



Mom says I should set my sights HIGHER and become an engineer or a doctor or something like that. She says if I just play video games all day and don't take school seriously, I'm gonna end up being a garbage collector.

First of all, the only doctor I know is our pediatrician, Dr. Higgins, and I can't see myself spending the rest of my life suctioning mucus out of little kids' noses.

And second, being a garbage collector seems like a pretty sweet deal to ME. The guys who collect our trash get to be outside every day and crank their music up really loud. So if the video game tester thing doesn't work out for me, garbage collector seems like a good fallback plan.



When I was little, Mom always told me I could be anything I wanted when I grew up.

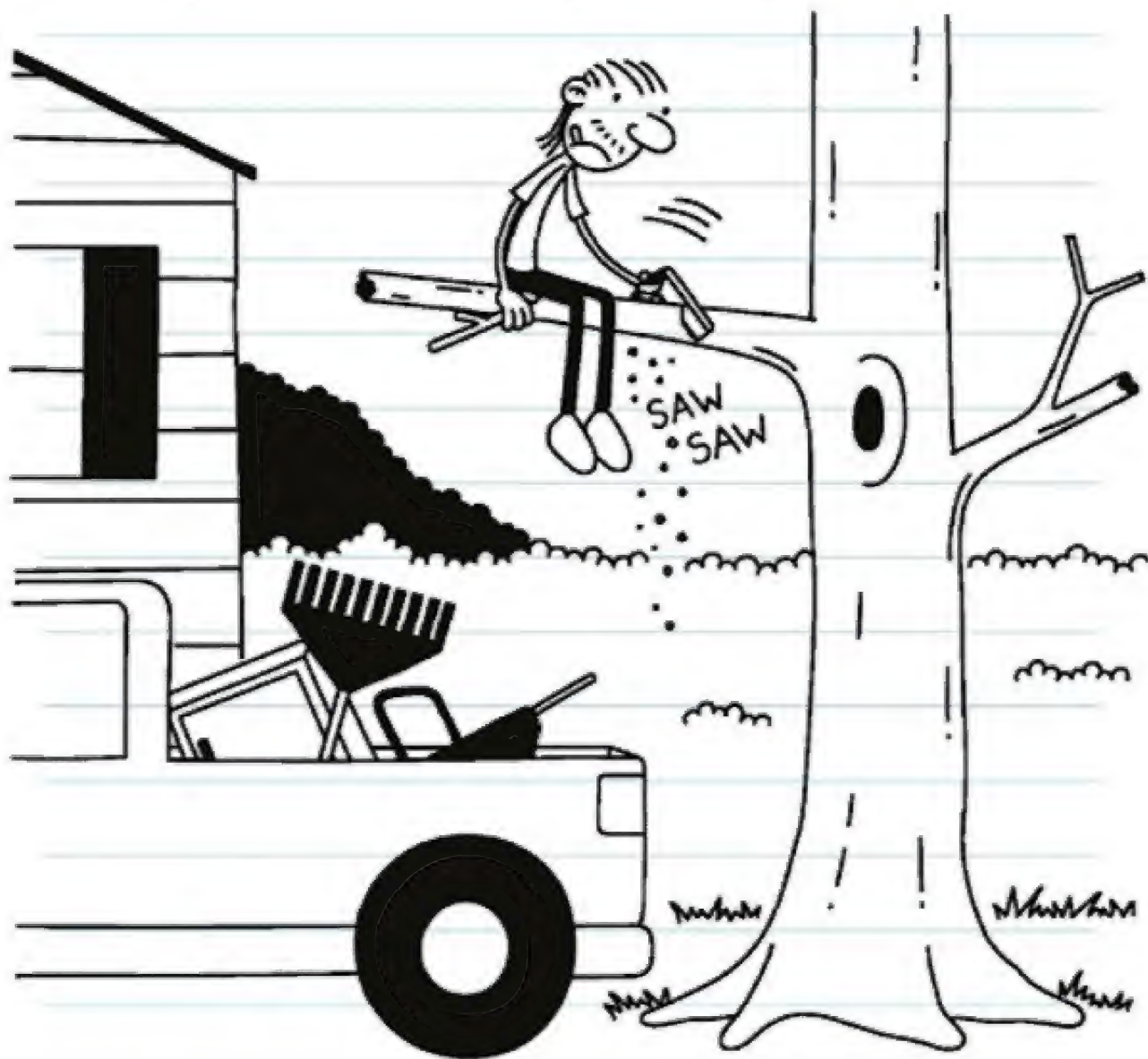
I didn't find out until later on that she was just talking about JOBS. I thought I could literally be ANYTHING.



Mom's always saying we have a lot of brains in our family, and that one of my great-great-great aunts helped invent a cure for a disease way back when.



But trust me, we've got a lot of real DUMMIES in our family, too. Just last week my uncle Gary cut down a big branch that was overhanging his driveway, and he ended up breaking his collarbone.



With people like Uncle Gary in my gene pool, it's a miracle I can even tie my own shoes. But Mom's always saying I can do great things if I put my mind to it.

Albert Sandy says human beings only use 80% of our brains, and if we can tap into the OTHER 20%, we can do amazing things.



If I'm the one who figures out how to tap into that extra 20%, though, I'm keeping that knowledge to myself. Because if you have all these people going around using their brains at full capacity, it's gonna be totally bananas.



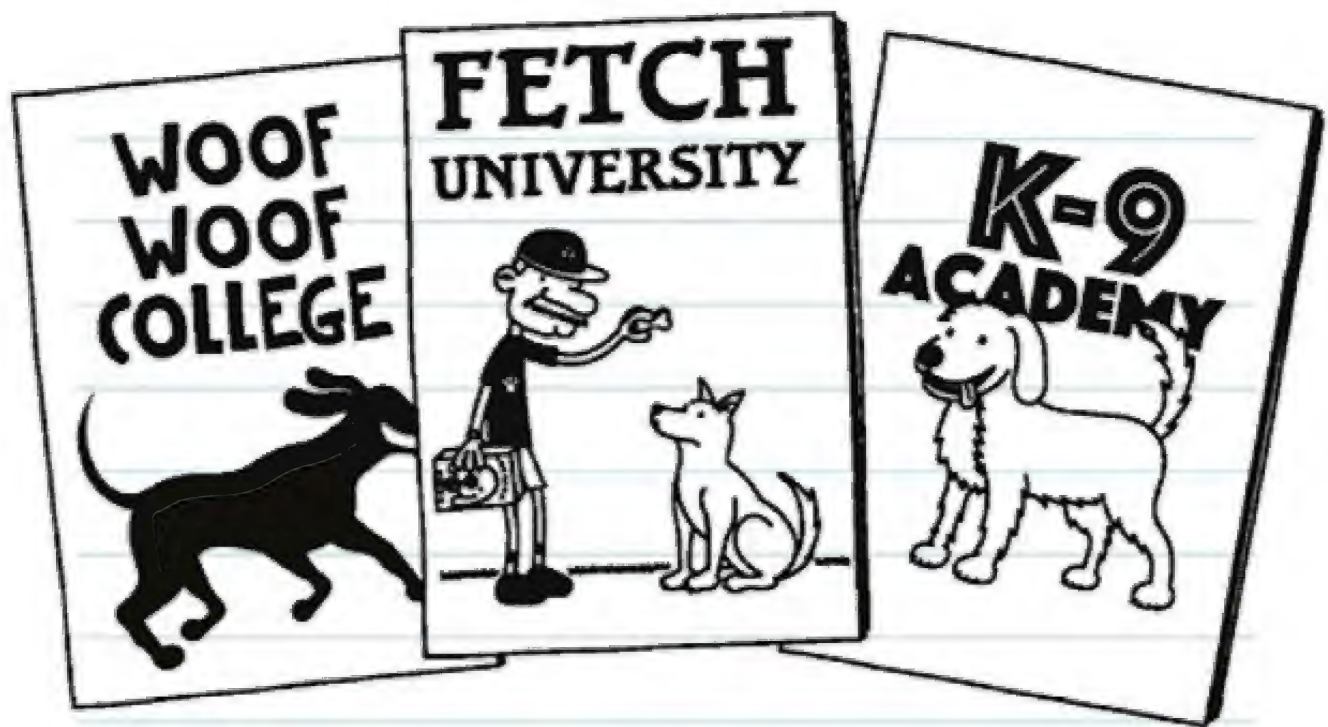
Wednesday

Mom's been trying to get Rodrick excited about college, and said it's time for him to get serious about looking into schools.

But Rodrick's still convinced his band is gonna make it big and that college is just a waste of time for a guy like him. I think Mom's starting to get a little worried, because now she's making Rodrick research colleges for a half hour a day instead of doing chores.



Rodrick wrote to a handful of schools to ask for their brochures, and Mom got all excited when they came in the mail. But most of the colleges were for DOGS, which either Rodrick didn't notice or he thinks those might be the only schools he has a chance of getting into.

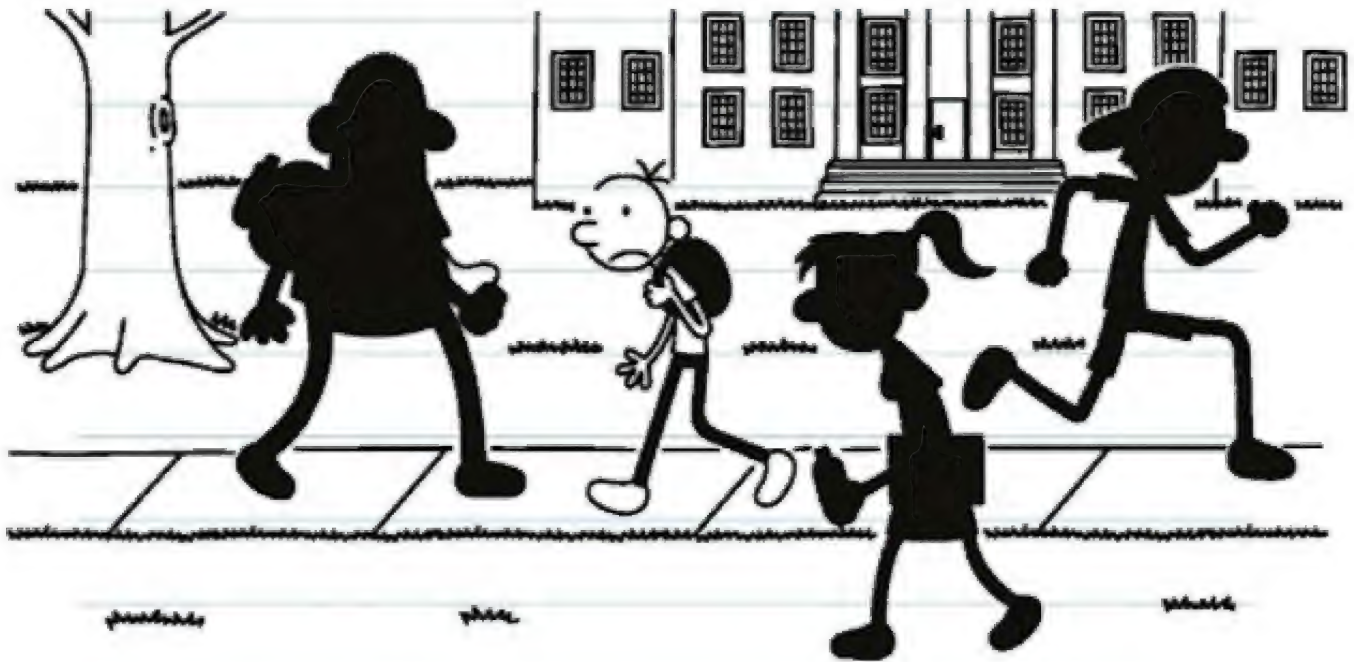


Since Mom can't get Rodrick interested in college, she's turned her attention to ME. On Monday, Mom took me to her school so I could see what the campus was like, and I have to admit it was actually kind of cool.



Mom said that in college you can study anything you WANT, and all you need to succeed is a "curious mind." She told me that, while she went to her class, I should explore the campus so I could get a sense of what it's like for students.

I walked around for a while, but I felt like I didn't belong there.



Eventually I went to the library and just waited for Mom to be finished with her class.

I started doing my homework, but I could tell that all the college kids were wondering what some middle schooler was doing in their library.

That's when I remembered hearing about a girl my age who's so smart, she's already in medical school studying to be a doctor. I figured if I made myself look really smart, I'd look like I BELONGED there.

So I grabbed a stack of thick books about psychology off the nearest shelf and pretended I was really into them.



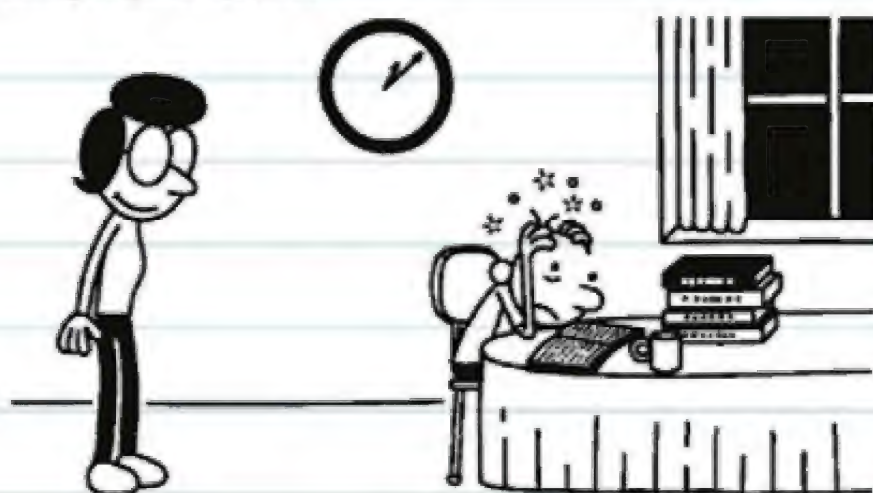
A few minutes later, a girl pulled up a chair and started talking to me.



The girl said I looked smart and she wanted to know if I'd be willing to tutor her for her Psychology test she had later in the week.

Now, I don't know the first thing about psychology, but I realized an opportunity like THIS only comes up once in a lifetime. I told her I was kind of busy at the moment, but I'd be willing to tutor her the NEXT day.

When Mom came back from class, I used her library card to check out every book on psychology I could find. And that night I studied like I've never studied before.



When the next day rolled around, I was READY. I asked Mom if she'd take me back to her college, and she seemed thrilled.

I spent two hours helping that girl prepare for her test, and by the time we were done, I knew she'd get a good grade. But then this big guy came by who was apparently her BOYFRIEND. And believe me, if I'd known there was a boyfriend involved I wouldn't have killed myself learning a bunch of useless information.



If this is the kind of thing I can expect in college, I'm gonna have to PASS. And by the way, I was right about what happens when you learn new stuff. I had a test on world capitals today, and I couldn't remember a single one.



Monday

All anyone at school can talk about these days is Mariana Mendoza's Halloween party, which is this coming Friday. But it's a little annoying for me, because I won't be getting an invitation.

Mariana's parties are kind of legendary because her parents don't care **WHAT** goes on, as long as it stays in the basement.



Last year's party got **TOTALLY** out of control. It started **OFF** in the basement, but so many people showed up that it spilled out into the yard, and the cops came to shut it down. And that's a pretty big deal for a middle school party.



This year, Mariana's parents said she has to keep it **SMALL**, so she's only inviting people who are in the school band with her. That's bad news for kids like me who were hoping to get invited this time around.

Rowley's gonna get invited, though, because he's in the band. But believe me, if he goes to a party like **THAT**, he's gonna be in over his head.

I was thinking about this at school today when I had a genius idea. If I join the BAND, I can get invited to Mariana's party.

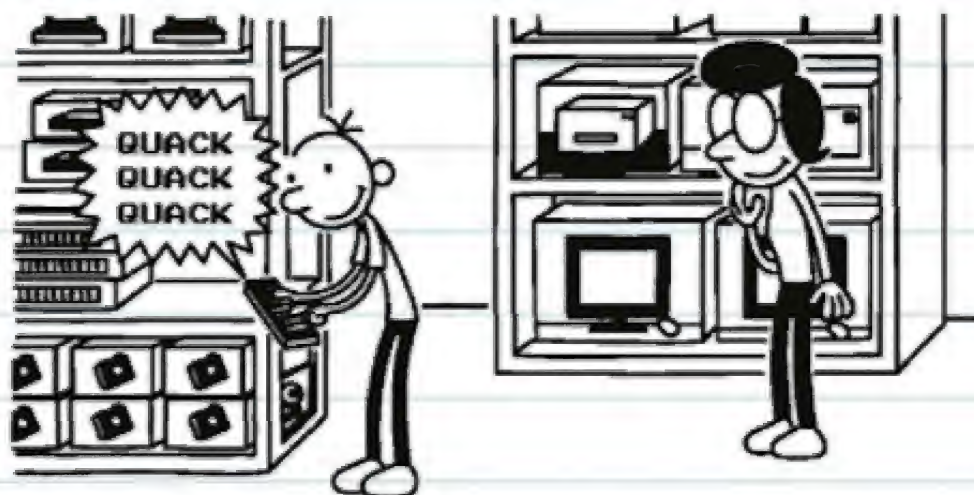
Tonight, when I told Mom and Dad I wanted to join the band, Mom was all for it. She was really excited I wanted to challenge myself and try something new. But Dad wasn't crazy about the idea.

Dad said instruments are EXPENSIVE, and he doesn't think I'll stick with it. But Mom said Rodrick stuck with the DRUMS, which I don't think really helped my case.



That's when Dad brought up the PIANO.

Two years ago, Mom saw me fooling around with one of those little electronic keyboards at the mall the week before Christmas. I liked it because it had all these buttons that made different sound effects.

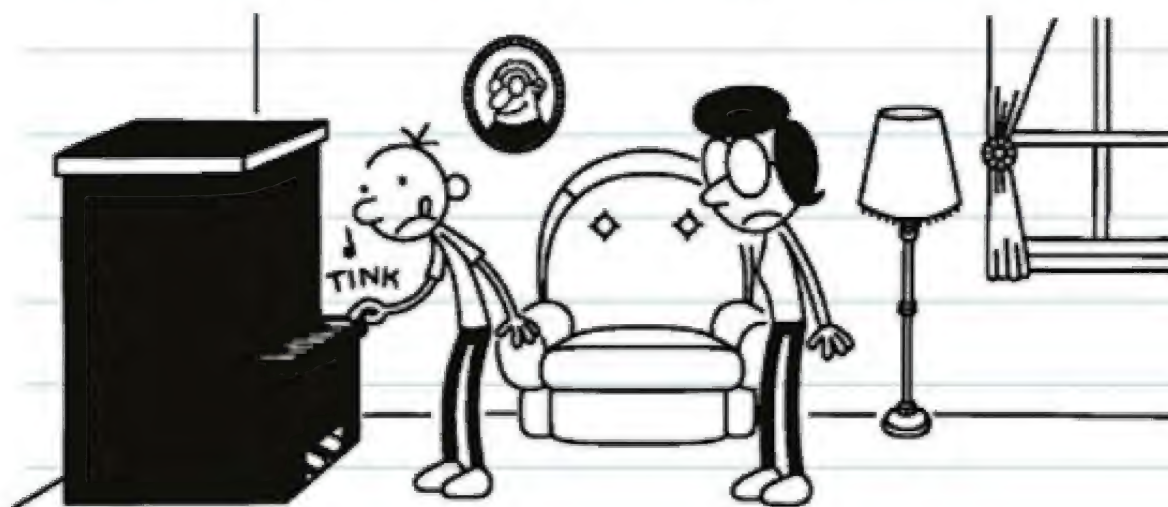


I think Mom got a little overly excited that I was showing interest in a musical instrument, because on Christmas Eve a truck rolled up to deliver a full-size piano.

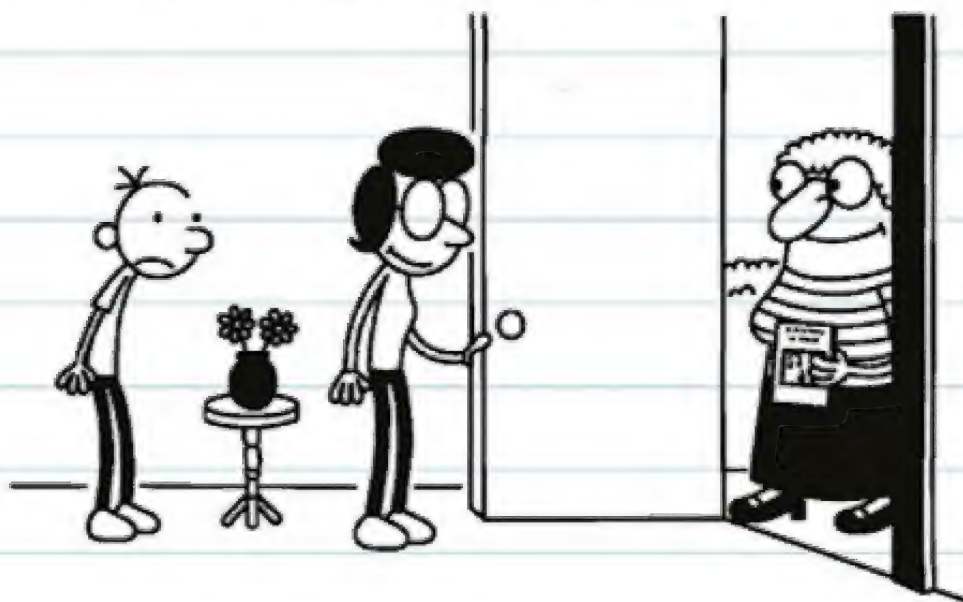


Judging by Dad's reaction, I don't think Mom checked with him before buying it.

At first I was excited about the piano, but when I realized it didn't make laser sounds and stuff like that, I lost interest real quick.

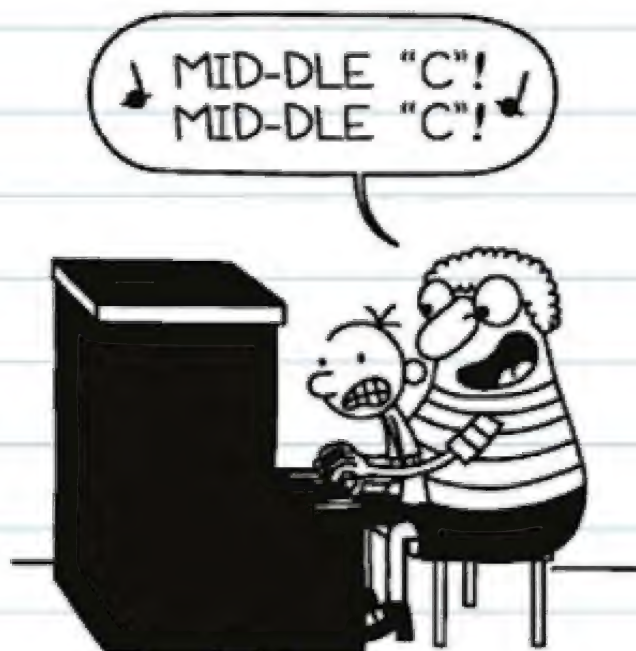


But Mom wasn't gonna let me give up so fast. She hired a lady named Mrs. French to come to the house and give me private lessons twice a week.




Mrs. French knew her stuff when it came to the piano, but I was a TERRIBLE student.


The first problem was Mrs. French's teaching style. She'd sit right behind me on the bench and put her fingers on top of MY fingers. That approach might work for SOME of Mrs. French's students, but it definitely didn't work for ME.



Then there was the music itself. If I was gonna play the piano, I wanted to learn cool songs like the ones you hear on the radio. But Mrs. French said I had to start with the BASICS, and she gave me a "Beginner's Songbook" that looked like it was older than Mrs. French.

All the songs in that thing were really corny, and it was hard for me to get into them.

C-D-E with Bee 



C D E! Sing with me!

Sing with bee! Sing with glee!

I felt pretty bad, because Mrs. French gave me homework every time she visited, but I NEVER practiced in between lessons. So every time she came we'd have to start over with the "C-D-E" song, which must've driven her nuts.

Eventually Mrs. French gave up trying to teach me anything, and she'd just read gossip magazines while I did my own thing.

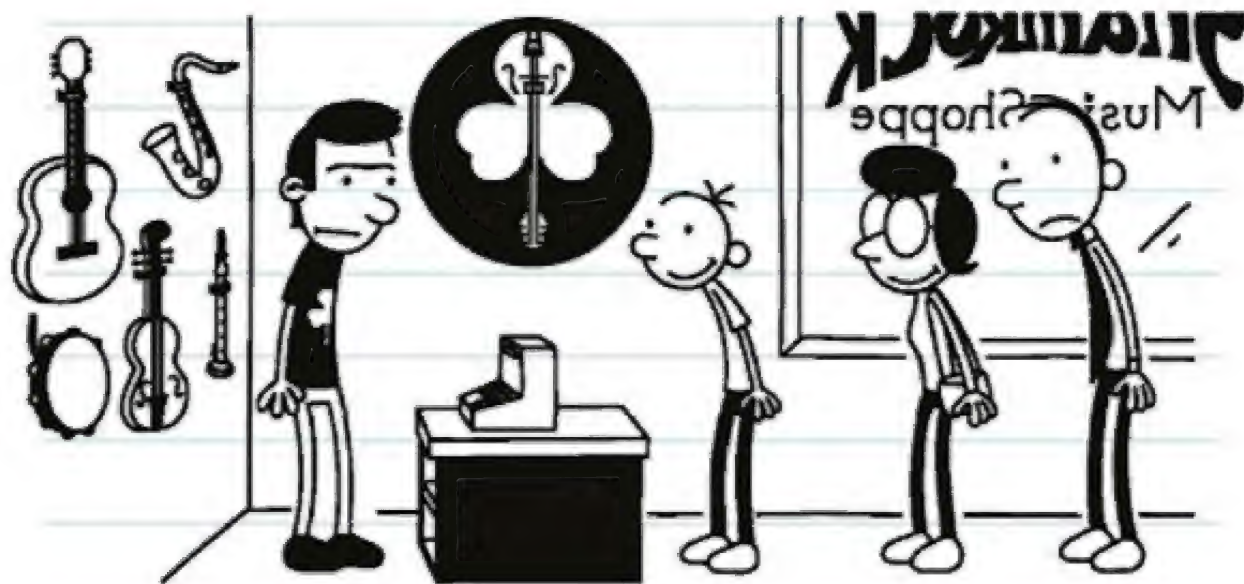
It went on like that for a month or two, but eventually Mom discovered what was happening and that was the end of my private lessons.



Now the piano is just a giant piece of furniture taking up space in the living room. I think Mom and Dad are still paying that thing off, so I can kind of understand why Dad's not eager for me to try a NEW instrument.

Luckily, Mom had my back. She said maybe the piano wasn't the right FIT for me, and that sometimes the instrument needs to find the PERSON. She finally convinced him when she said that kids who play musical instruments do better at math and go on to get better jobs.

A half hour later we were at the music store downtown picking out an instrument.



My number one requirement for an instrument is that it makes me look COOL. I saw a guy at Mom's college strumming a guitar outside the library, and he DEFINITELY had the right idea.



Unfortunately, the guitar isn't one of the instruments in our middle school band. So I had to pick something else.

I had my eye on the saxophone at first, because with that one it's hard NOT to look cool. I learned THAT from Declan Vaughn, who practices his during recess.



But there are WAY too many buttons on that thing, and I knew I'd never get the hang of it.

Mom suggested I take a look at the French horn, which SHE used to play as a kid. The French horn looked cool enough and only had three buttons, so I figured I could probably handle it.

The shopkeeper pulled the French horn down off the hook and handed it to me. But when Dad saw the price tag, he put the brakes on the whole thing.



Dad said we should RENT instead of buy, because that would be a whole lot cheaper. But all the rental instruments were USED.

The kid who played the French horn in the school band last year was Joshua Ballard, and there was a chance the rental belonged to HIM.



Mom and Dad got into an argument in front of everyone, and it was kind of embarrassing. Dad said we were spending too much money on something I'd quit in two weeks, and Mom said he needed to show more FAITH in me.



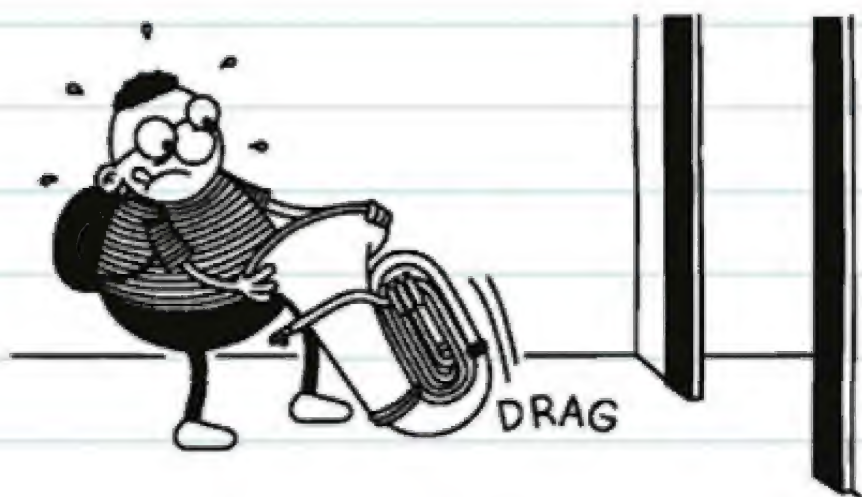
Eventually, Dad caved in. But before he swiped his credit card, he made me promise I'd practice every night.

This thing better be as easy as it looks. Because it feels like a lot of trouble to go through just to get invited to a Halloween party.

Tuesday

When I was picking an instrument, I should've put more thought into it. I was mostly thinking about IMAGE, but there are OTHER considerations, too.

It was a pain in the neck bringing my French horn to school today, because the CASE weighs almost as much as the instrument. But when I saw what Grayden Bundy had to deal with, I felt OK about my choice.



Everybody says Annabelle Grier is one of the smartest girls in our grade, and it's easy to see why. She plays the piccolo, so she's not wasting any energy lugging a heavy instrument around.



But George Deveney might be even smarter than HER. He plays the kettledrums, and those are too big to take home every night, so they stay in the band room full-time.

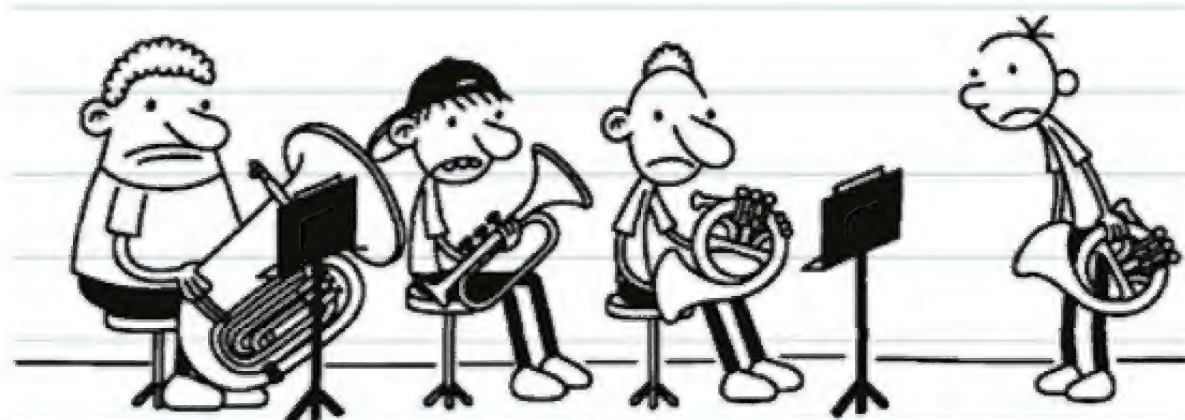


Something I never really noticed before is that most of the kids in the band actually kind of LOOK like their instruments. I don't know if people do that on purpose or if it's just a coincidence.



The great thing about the band is that there are no tryouts or anything. Basically, if you buy an instrument and show up, you're in.

But I wasn't thinking it all the way through when I picked my instrument. The French horn is in the brass section, and almost everyone in the brass section is a GUY.



The woodwind section is the complete opposite. It's all GIRLS except for a handful of guys, including Rowley. I really wish he'd given me a heads-up about it, because that information would've been nice to know.

Maybe Rowley didn't tell me on PURPOSE so I wouldn't give him any competition.

I noticed he sits right next to Mariana Mendoza, and believe me, that's no accident.



When class started, Mrs. Graziano told us to start warming up. That's when I remembered that my least favorite sound in the world is kids practicing their instruments.

But Mrs. Graziano didn't seem to mind. She's retiring this year, so I think she's already checked out.



I sat next to the only other kid who plays the French horn, Evan Pittman, who looked like he knew what he was doing. With the way he moved his fingers around, it seemed a lot more complicated than I was expecting. But I figured I might as well give it a shot.

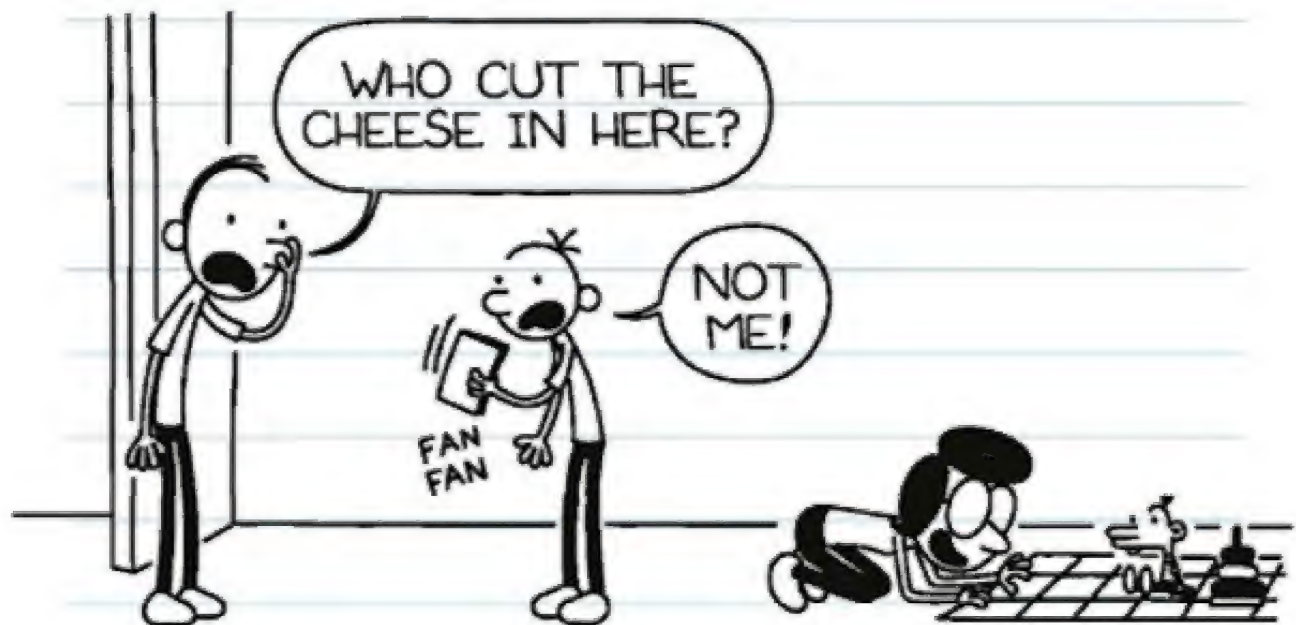
I filled my cheeks with air just like Evan did, and I blew into the mouthpiece as hard as I could. But the air didn't come out where I expected.



As soon as it happened, everyone in the band just FROZE. Jake McGough started trying to sniff out who did it, because he's got a weird talent for that sort of thing.



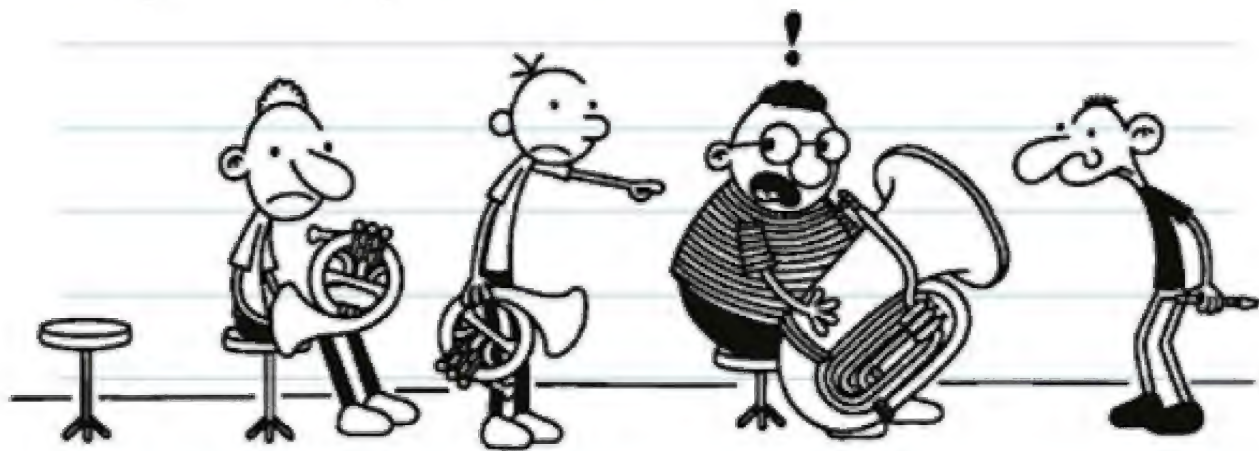
But if there's one thing you should know about me, it's that I have NEVER taken blame for a fart. I'd even throw my own mother under the bus, and trust me, I have.



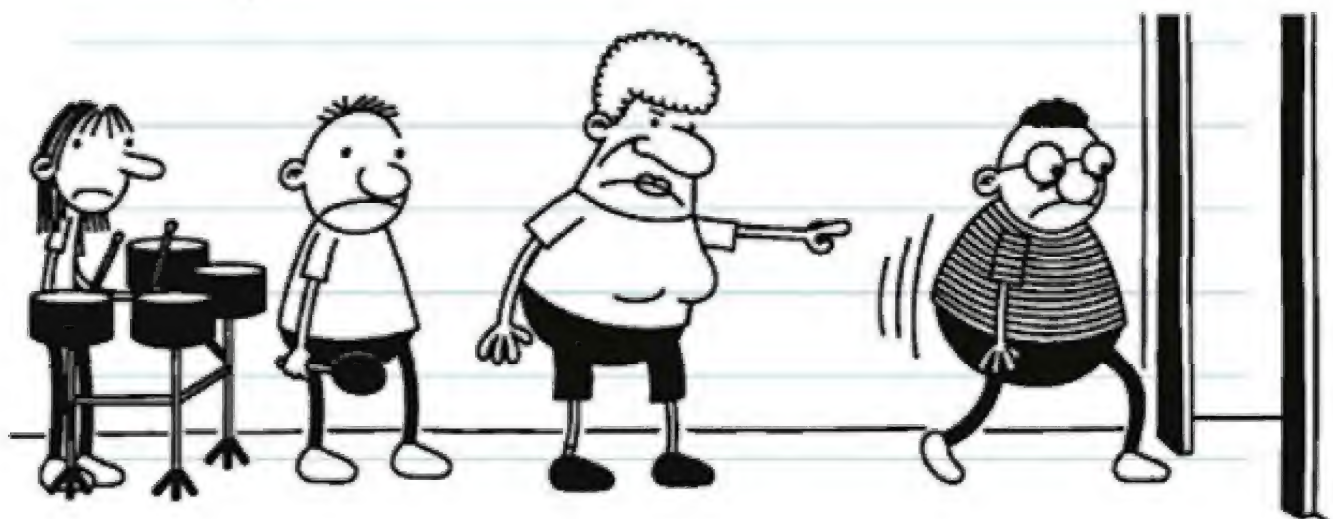
The kids in the band were starting to look my way. I was really sweating it, because if I was gonna get invited to Mariana Mendoza's Halloween party, my reputation couldn't take a hit like this.

Jake McGough was getting closer and closer, and I knew I was only seconds away from getting identified.

So I did what I HAD to do, and pinned it on Grayden Bundy.



I didn't feel TOO bad, because Grayden has a reputation for letting it rip in class. So the way I see it, this was punishment for all the times he got away with one.



Thursday

I wish I could go back in time and pick a new instrument, because this French horn is no joke.

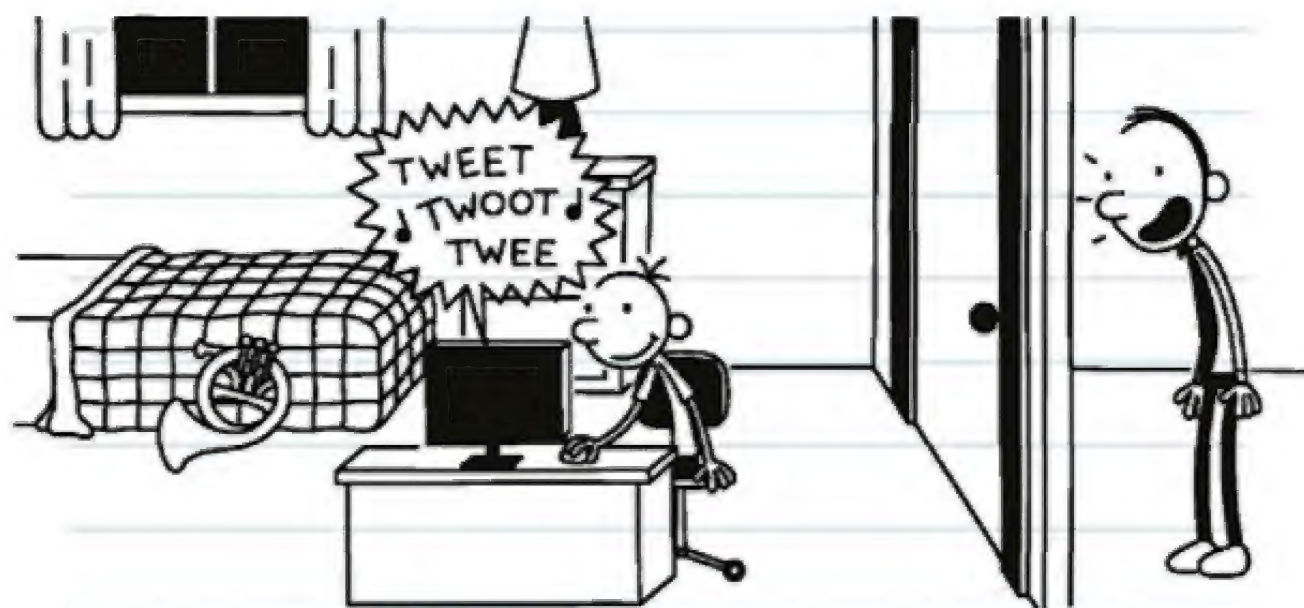
The guy at the music store never mentioned that it's a LEFT-handed instrument, and I'm a RIGHTY.

I thought it would be easy with the whole three-button thing, but my left hand isn't strong enough to work it. Plus, the mouthpiece is TINY, and I can't get any air through it. So far I haven't been able to squeeze out ANYTHING that sounds like a musical note.



Unfortunately, that doesn't help me with DAD. He wants to hear me practicing each night, like I promised him.

Luckily, I found some video clips of a high school girl practicing HER French horn. So those videos are doing the trick, at least for now.



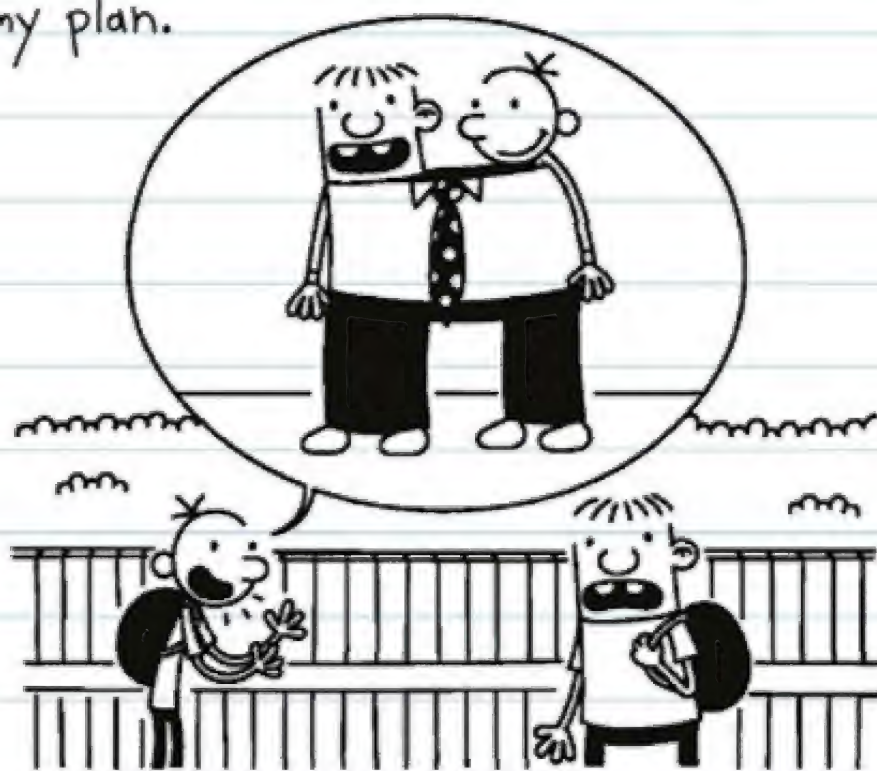
This whole musical instrument thing might be a big waste of time, anyway. Mariana didn't invite the entire band to her party tomorrow night, just the WOODWIND section.

That means if you play a brass instrument like me, you're out of luck. But then I realized I've got an IN. Rowley's part of the woodwind section, and if HE'S going, then I can just tag along.

I can't just show up with him, though, or I could get turned away at the door.

So I figured out a way to make sure that doesn't happen. I realized that if I make myself part of Rowley's COSTUME, then wherever he goes, I go, too. That's how I came up with the idea of us going as a two-headed monster.

On the walk home from school, I told Rowley all about my plan.

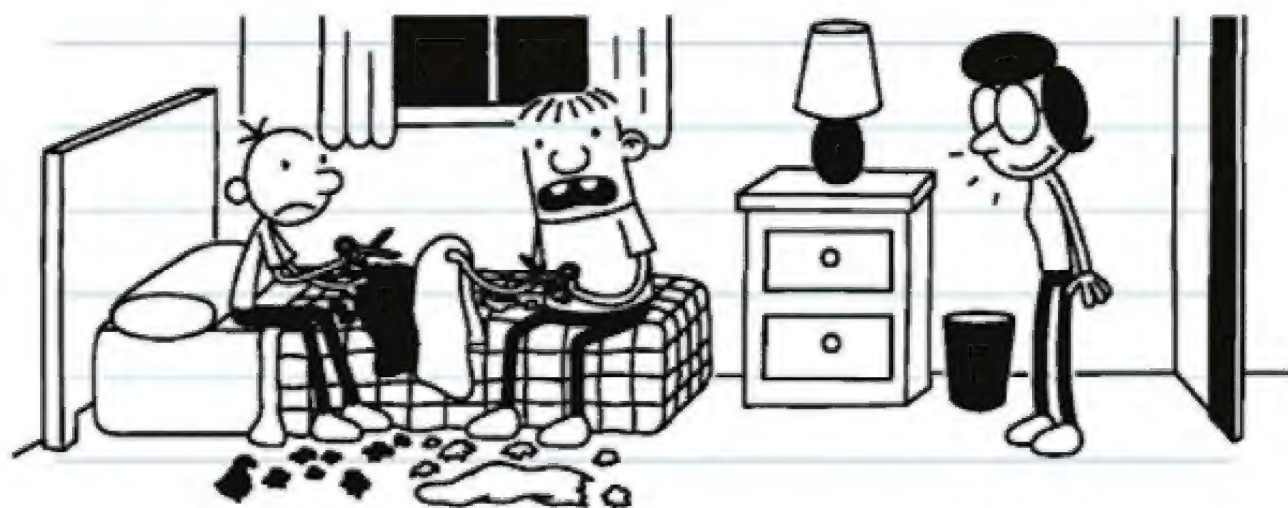


But Rowley said he wanted to go to the party as a "nice witch," and his mom was already working on his costume.

See, this is EXACTLY why Rowley needs me to go with him.

I told Rowley if he went to a party like this dressed up as a witch, he'd never live it down at school. I think that made him kind of nervous, so he said he changed his mind and wanted to do the two-headed-monster thing I had come up with.

So tonight we got to work making the costume out of some sheets I found in the linen closet. When Mom got home from school, I realized I should've asked permission before cutting them up. But she was really happy me and Rowley were **MAKING** something instead of playing video games like we usually do.

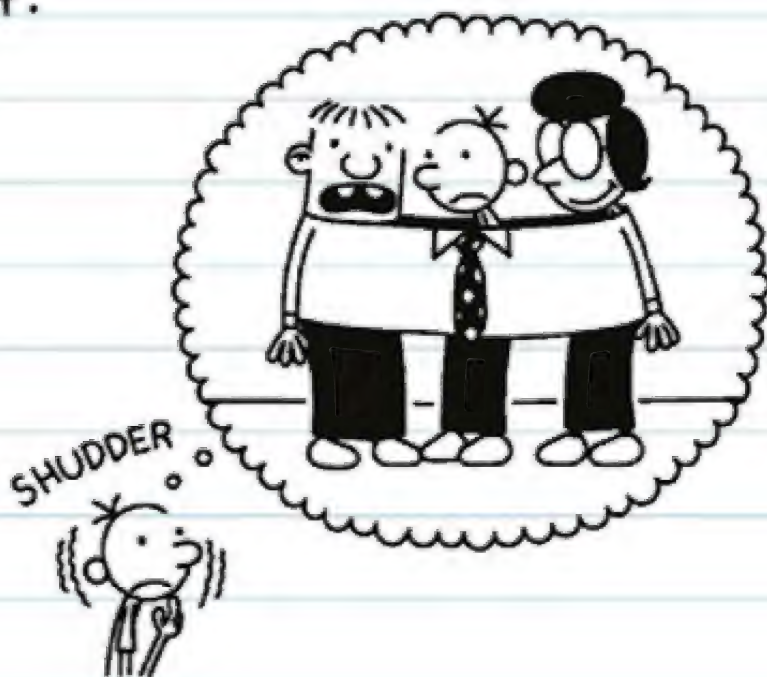


I told her we were making a two-headed-monster costume, and she thought that was a **GREAT** idea for trick-or-treating.

I told Mom the costume was actually for Mariana Mendoza's Halloween party, and as soon as I said it, I wished I could take it back. Like I said before, last year's party was a total blowout, and EVERYONE in our town heard about it.

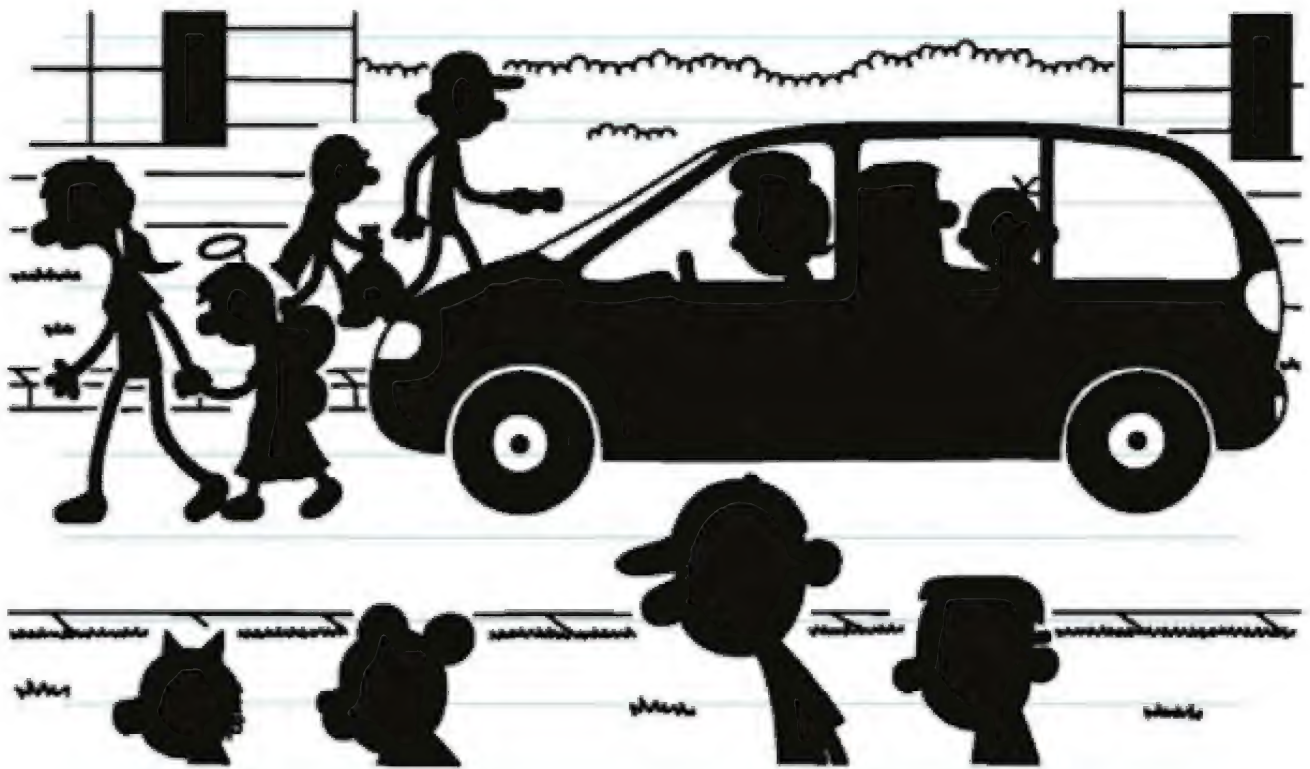
But Mom was actually good with the idea. She said a party was a chance for us to "branch out" and grow our "friend circle." She said she'd even be happy to give us a RIDE.

I'm just relieved she didn't suggest adding another head to the costume, because believe me, that's EXACTLY the kind of thing she would think of.



Halloween

It took a long time to get to Mariana's house tonight because the street was full of little kids trick-or-treating.

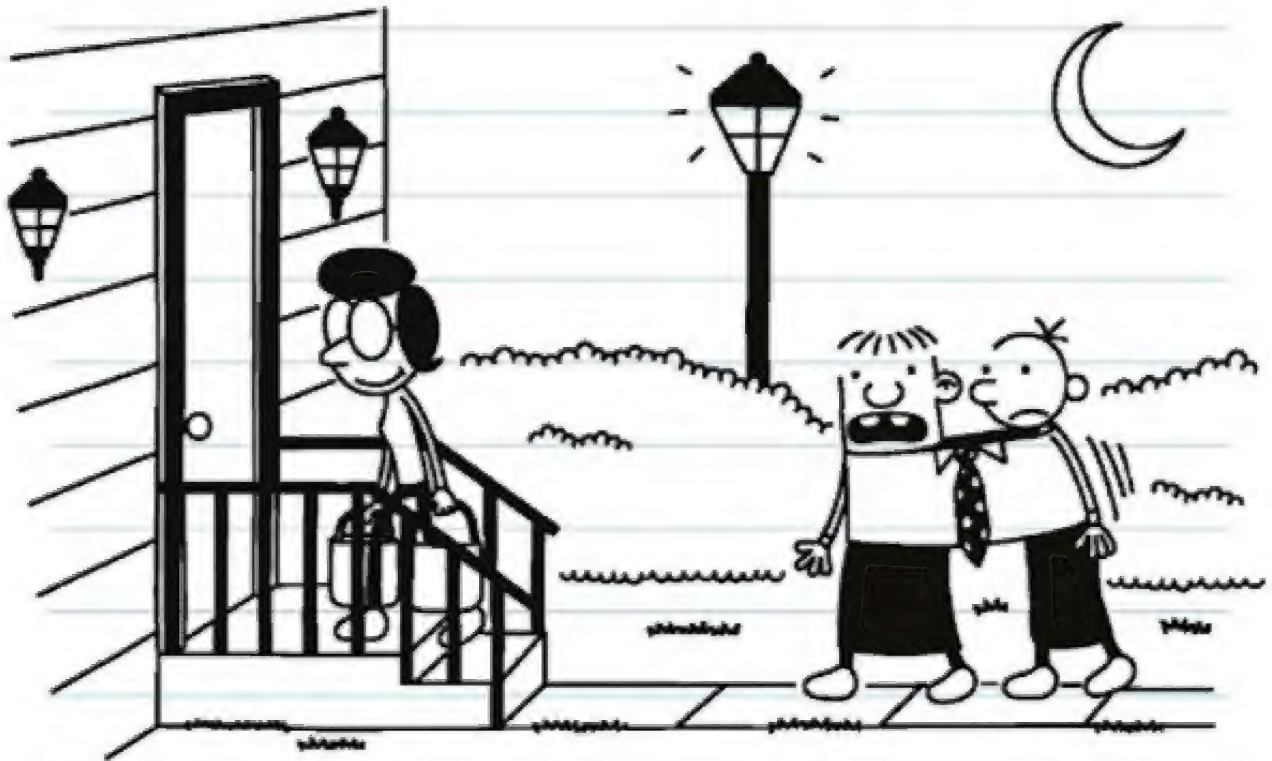


I was kind of GLAD we were a little late, because if we showed up right on time, we'd look like we were too eager. When we finally got to Mariana's, I told Mom thanks for the ride and not to come back for us until the party ended at 11:00.

But Mom turned off the ignition, got out of the minivan, and pulled some bags from the back.

When I asked her what she was doing, she said she was coming in to introduce herself to Mr. and Mrs. Mendoza.

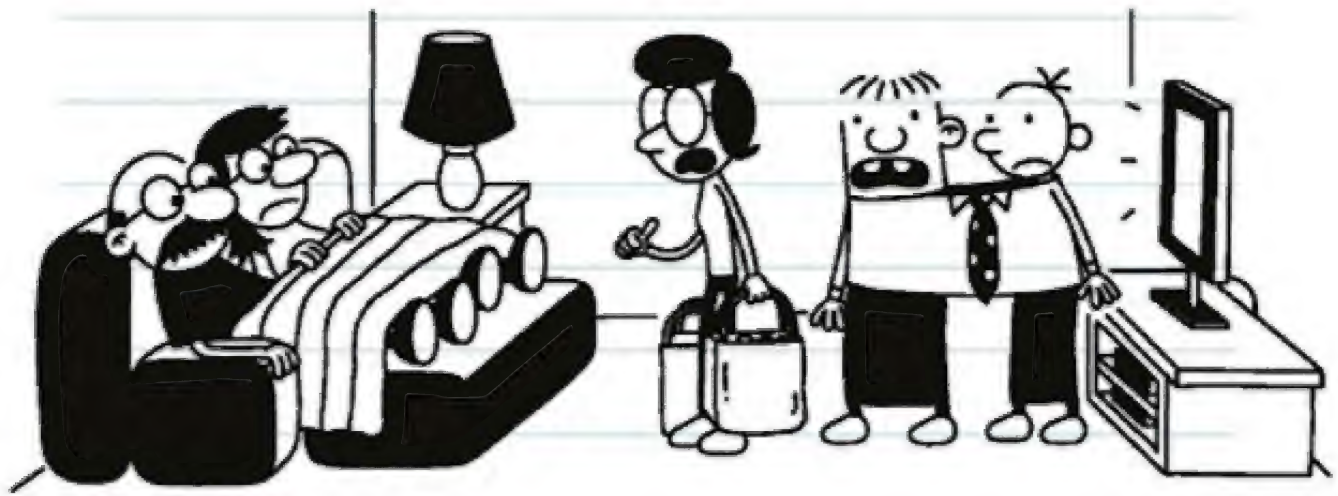
I BEGGED Mom not to, but when she decides to do something, there's really no stopping her.



She rang the doorbell, but nobody answered. We could hear loud music coming from the basement, so Mom opened the door and we all stepped inside.

Mr. and Mrs. Mendoza were on the couch watching a horror movie, and they didn't seem too interested in getting up and chatting with Mom.

Mom asked if she could go downstairs and check out the party, and they seemed totally fine with it.



Now I was REALLY nervous. Mom opened the door to the basement and headed on down, and all me and Rowley could really do was follow. There were a lot of kids there already, and they looked like they were having a blast.



But when everyone saw Mom, they stopped what they were doing.

Mom pulled a bunch of homemade Halloween games out of her bag, and I got a sick feeling in my stomach. I should've known what Mom was up to when I saw her reading the October edition of "Family Frolic" magazine last night.



When Mom pulled out her party games, I figured everyone would just ignore her and go back to having fun. But then something CRAZY happened.

A bunch of the girls started **HELPING** Mom set up her stuff.



From that point on Mom was running the show. She invited everyone at the party to play these corny Halloween games. I thought I might actually die of embarrassment, but everybody got into it and seemed to be having a great time.



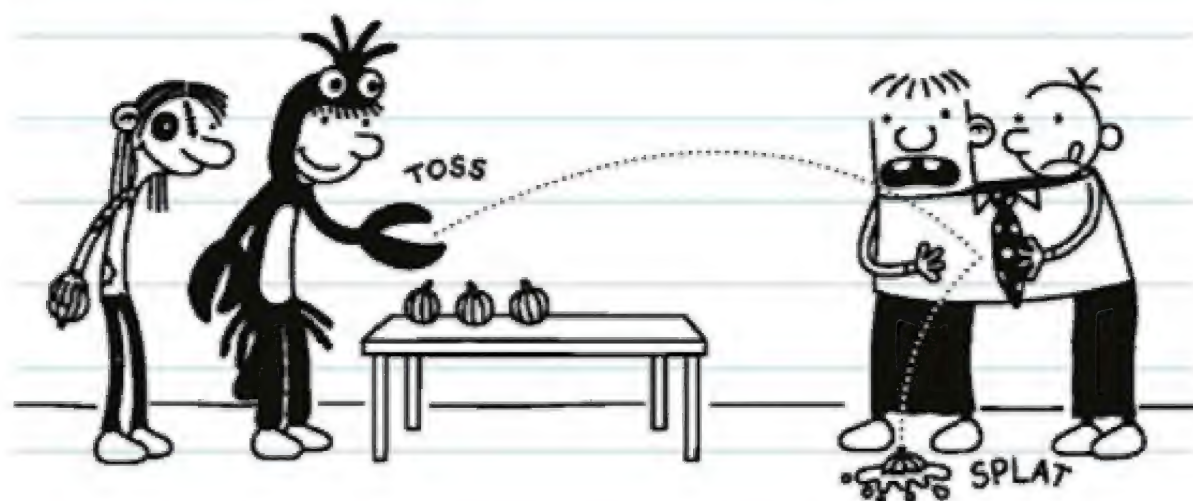
I think the person who was having the MOST fun was Rowley. His favorite game was the one where you eat a doughnut on a string, and he set the record with five in thirty seconds.



Once I realized everyone was having a good time, I relaxed a little. I even played a few games MYSELF. Me and Rowley took first prize in Pin the Boo on the Ghost, and I gotta admit we made a pretty good team.



In fact, we won a LOT of Mom's games. The only one we stunk at was the Mini Pumpkin Toss, but I guess you can't be good at EVERYTHING.



After the games were over, somebody turned the music louder, and the party cranked up a notch. It was a little hard to pull out my best moves while I was attached to Rowley, but I still had some pretty good stuff.



I gotta say, it was AWESOME. The only kids who WEREN'T having fun were the handful of guys who were there. But I wasn't gonna let a few sour grapes spoil my good time.



Right when the party was about to hit the next level, Rowley told me he needed to use the bathroom. But when we made the costume we didn't PLAN for that sort of thing.

There wasn't a zipper or anything like that, so the only way to get out of the costume was to cut it off. Neither one of us was wearing pants underneath, so THAT wasn't happening.

I was pretty annoyed, because earlier in the evening I had TOLD Rowley to slow down on the fruit punch, and of course he hadn't listened.

I decided he was just gonna have to wait until we got home to deal with it. So I tried to go back to having fun, but Rowley made it kind of impossible for me to enjoy myself.



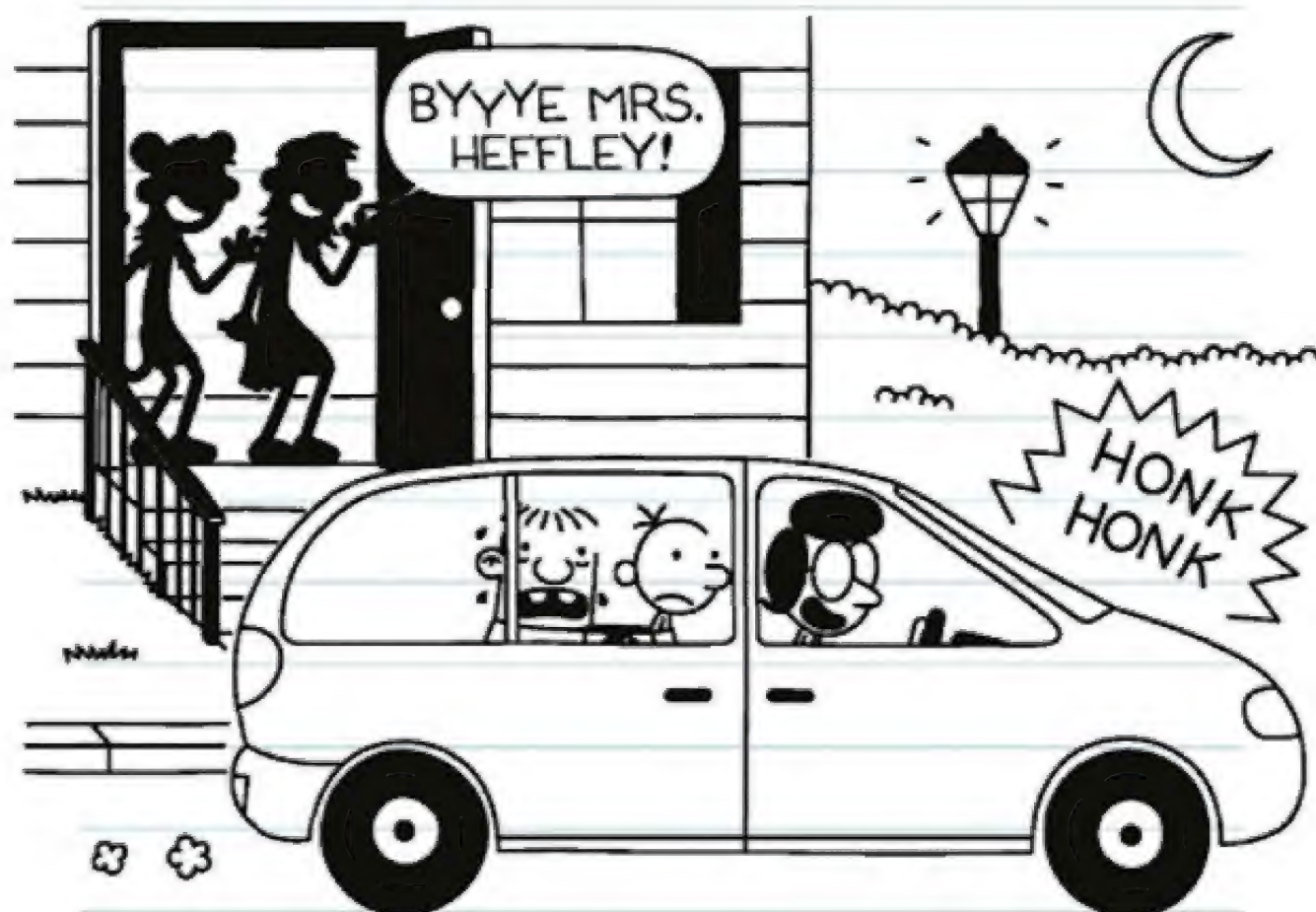
I think Mom figured out what was going on from the look on Rowley's face, and she said it was time for us to "wrap things up" and head home.

Now I was REALLY mad. The party was in full swing and we had to leave because Rowley needed a potty break.

But Mom said it's better to leave a party when it's going strong than when it's fizzling out. She said it makes you look COOL, because everybody will think you have better things to do.

I don't know what's better than hanging out with Mariana Mendoza, but Mom was practically pushing me up the stairs.

When we drove away, I was pretty miserable. But Mom was as happy as I've ever seen her.



NOVEMBER

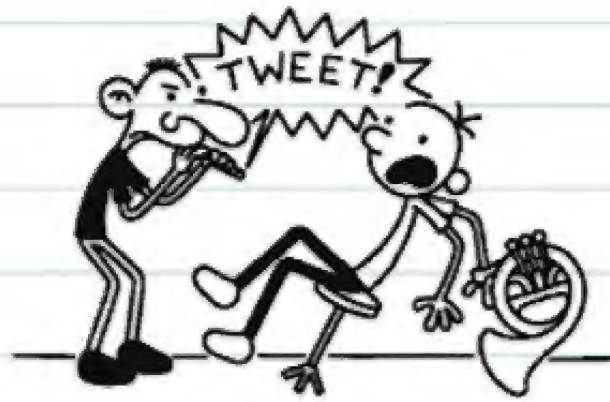
Thursday

All this week, Mariana and her friends have been saying how great the party was and how much fun my mom was. I don't know how to feel about that, exactly, but I guess I'll take it as a compliment.

I've kind of lost interest in being in the band, though, and it's not JUST because the party's in the rearview mirror. Once we got back to school on Monday, the guys in the woodwind section started giving me a hard time.

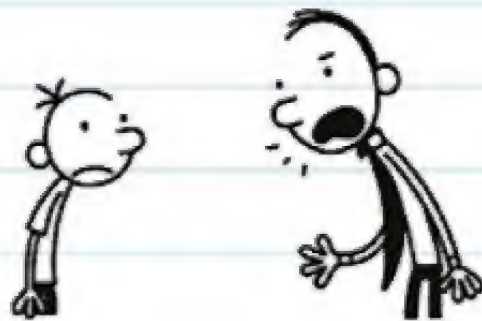


And it's not just the BIG guys, either. Even Jake McGough's gotten in on the act.



When I told Mom and Dad I was thinking of quitting the band, Dad said that wasn't an option. He said my instrument cost a lot of money, and that I had to honor my "commitment."

He said I can't just quit something because it's HARD, and if there's anything he's gonna teach me, it's PERSEVERANCE.



I could tell Dad wasn't gonna let it go, so I promised him I'd keep trying. He seemed pretty happy with that, and I thought I was off the hook.

Then he told me he's gonna come to the Fall Concert to cheer me on. I told Dad the concert is during the school day, so he won't be ABLE to come. But Dad said it's important to him, so he's gonna take off work.

Now the pressure's REALLY on. I've been trying to learn to play this thing ever since, but trust me, it's not easy.

I asked Rowley to come over and help me tonight, because I figured he's been in the band for a while and knows a thing or two about instruments. But every time the two of us are in a room together, we end up getting distracted.



Dad was pretty mad, because he said all me and Rowley do when we're together is screw around. So he sent Rowley home and told me to get back to work. But even that girl in the videos gave up trying to learn the French horn, so I guess I'm REALLY on my own.

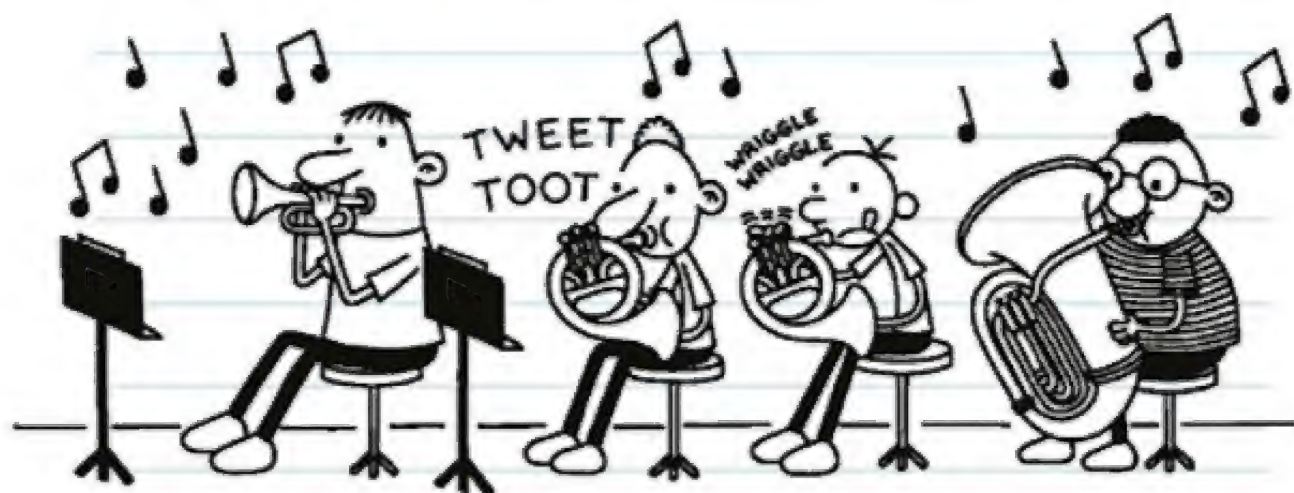


Wednesday

Today was the day of the big Fall Concert. I never technically learned how to play my instrument, but I did figure out how to get BY.

I sit right next to Evan Pittman in band practice, and he can play his French horn just fine. I realized if I just piggybacked on him and PRETENDED I was playing, he could do the work for BOTH of us.

So that's what I've been doing for the past two weeks. And if Mrs. Graziano didn't notice from ten feet away, I knew DAD wouldn't notice from across the room.

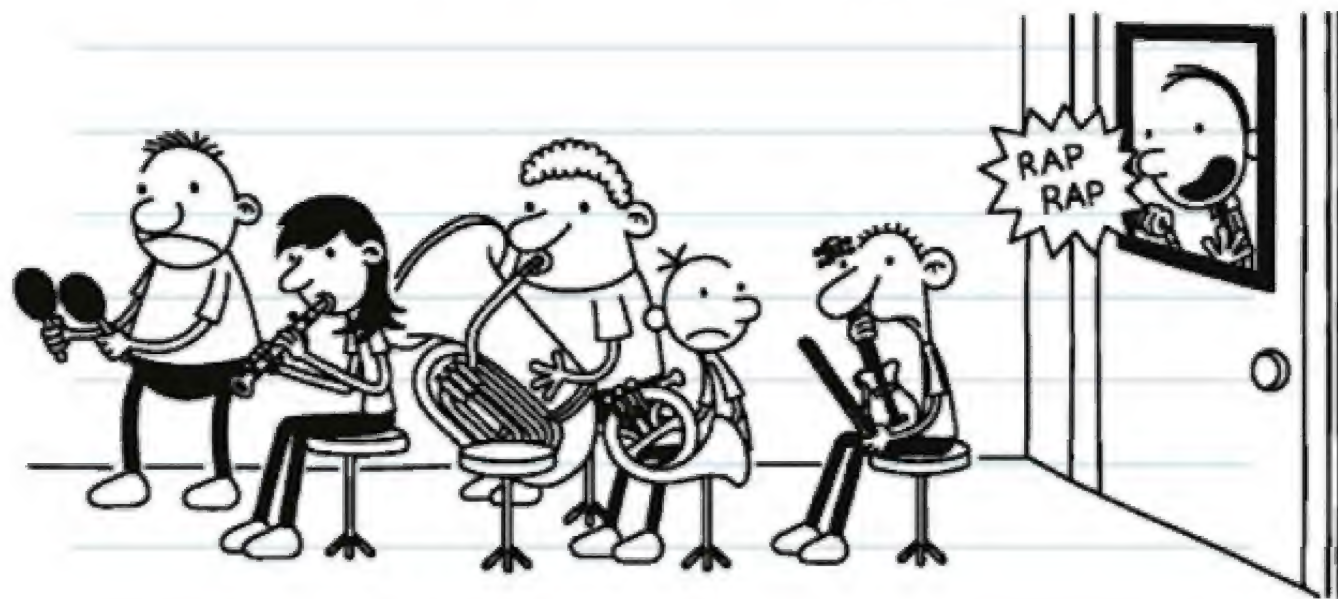


But ten minutes before showtime, Evan was nowhere to be found. I asked his best friend, Marcus Perez, where Evan was, and Marcus said Evan was getting his braces off today and was going to miss the concert.

I couldn't BELIEVE Evan would hang me out to dry like that. I thought the brass section is supposed to have each other's BACKS.

When it came time for the band to do warm-ups, I started to SWEAT.

I was praying Dad forgot about the Fall Concert, but then there he was at the stage door.

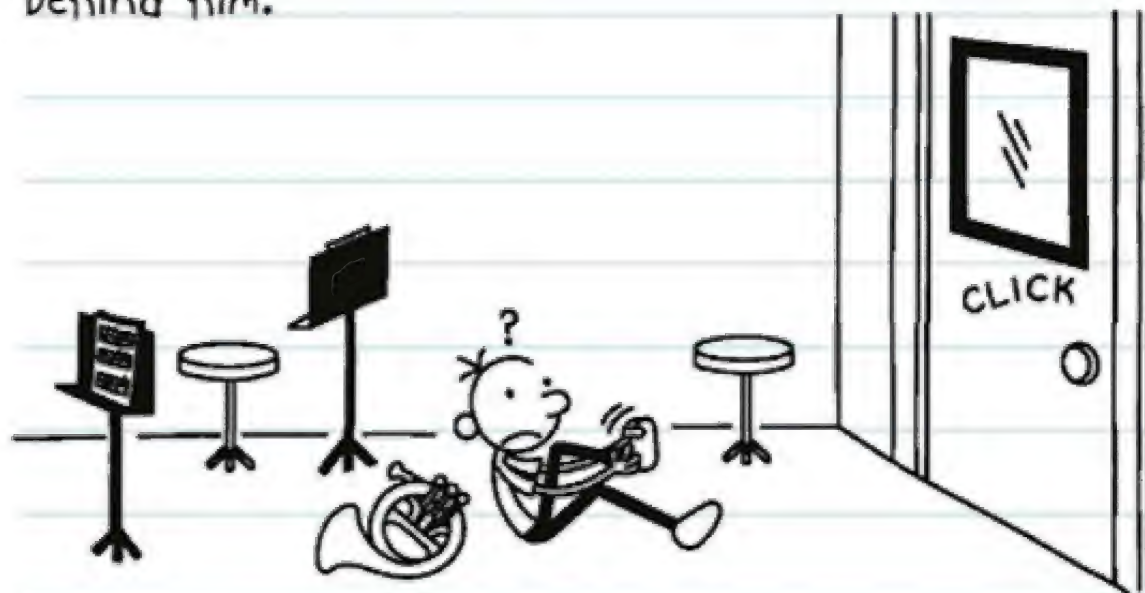


After the audience took their seats, it was time to go on stage. Mrs. Graziano led us out in single file, with the brass section going next to last.

But the woodwinds were right behind us, and that idiot Jake McGough stepped on the back of my shoe and gave me a flat tire.



I had to put my horn down to fix my shoe, and when I did, the last kid in the woodwind section went through the stage door and let it shut behind him.

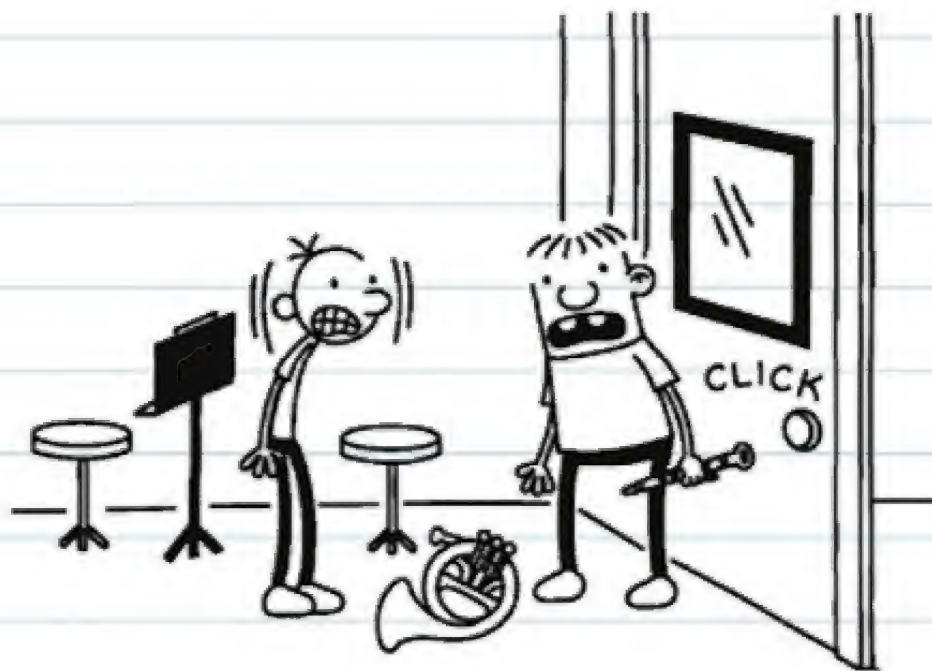


I tried to open the door, but it was LOCKED, so I pounded on the window. But everyone was tuning their instruments and couldn't hear me.



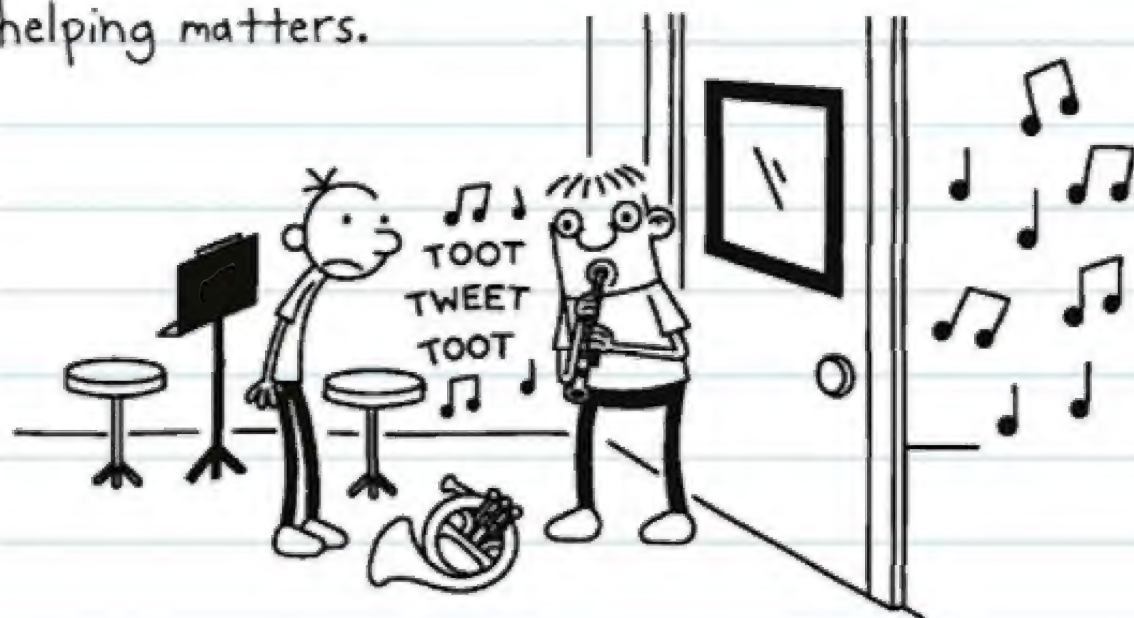
The concert was about to start, and all I could think about was Dad looking at my empty chair. So I knocked HARDER.

Luckily, Rowley saw me at the window, got up from his chair, and opened the door. But then he stepped INSIDE the room and let the door shut BEHIND him.



Now we were BOTH stuck. I knocked on the window again, but right at that moment Mrs. Graziano struck up the band and everyone started playing. Now it was HOPELESS, because there was no way anyone was gonna hear me with George Deveney pounding away on his kettledrums.

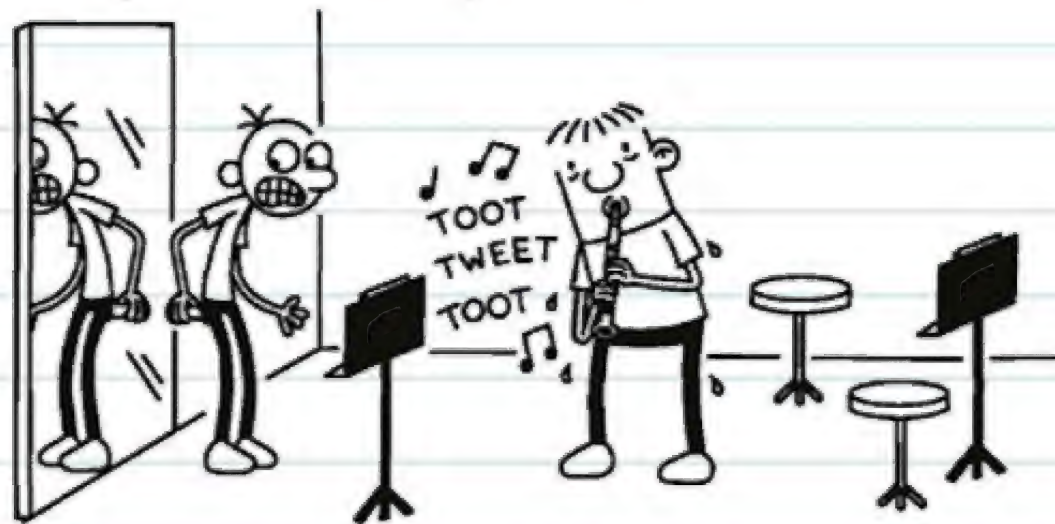
When the clarinet section piped in, Rowley went into a PANIC. He started playing along with the rest of the band, which was DEFINITELY not helping matters.



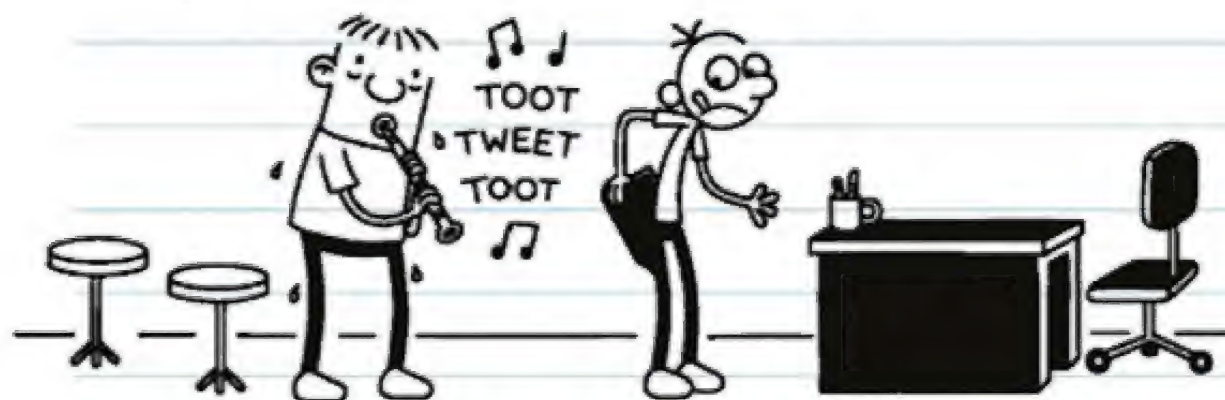
It was pretty clear it was gonna be up to me to get us out of there. I tried to pry the door open by putting my foot on the wall and pulling on the handle with all my strength. But I guess my pants couldn't take the stress.



I looked in the mirror on the back wall to check the damage, and there was a five-inch tear down the middle of my pants. That was really bad news, because you could see my underwear.



I realized that even if we managed to get the door back open, I couldn't go out there with this giant HOLE in my pants. So I looked around the room to see if there was anything I could use to cover up. I found a black binder on Mrs. Graziano's desk, and I slipped it down the back of my pants.



The binder covered up the hole pretty well, and from a distance no one would be able to notice. But it was so STIFF, I couldn't actually sit DOWN. So I had to take it out and come up with a different idea.

Then I thought of a solution. I grabbed a black marker off Mrs. Graziano's desk and told Rowley to color in the part of my underwear that was showing. That way, no one would even know my pants ripped.

Unfortunately, that's right when DAD came through the door. I don't know what it looked like to HIM, but I have a feeling it didn't look GOOD.



Thursday

No matter how many times I explained to Dad what had happened at the Fall Concert, he didn't want to hear it. He said me and Rowley were goofing off when we should've been performing with the band, and that's all he needed to know.



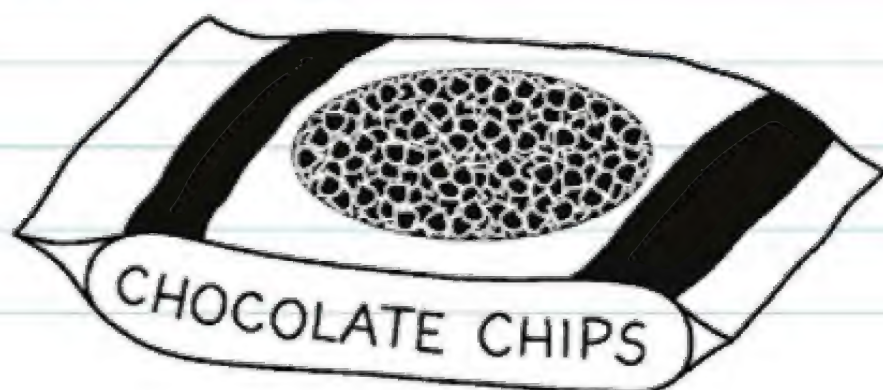
My punishment is two weeks with no television or video games, and I'm not allowed to have friends over after school. The only thing I really CAN do is practice my French horn, which I guess is the point.

But practicing that thing stresses me out, and stress makes me HUNGRY. I usually have a whole pillowcase full of candy at this time of year, but since I skipped trick-or-treating to go to that party, I missed out on the best part of Halloween.

I knew there had to be leftover candy somewhere in the house, because on Halloween night, Dad told Mom the geese chased all the trick-or-treaters away.



So after school today I looked in all the places I thought Mom might've stashed the candy, but I came up empty. Now I was REALLY craving something sweet, but the only thing in the pantry was a bag of chocolate chips Mom told us were off-limits.



I think she's planning on making chocolate-chip cookies for the church Bake Fair. But I figured she'd never notice if just ONE chip went missing.

So I got some scissors and cut a tiny chocolate-chip-size hole in the bottom of the bag. Well, one chocolate chip turned into two, and two turned into FOUR. Then I kind of just lost my mind.



When I was done, I must've eaten at least a quarter of the bag. I thought there was still a chance Mom wouldn't notice, but the hole in the bag had gotten a lot BIGGER, and I needed to do something about that.

So I went through the junk drawer to look for a stapler.

But before I could USE it, the bottom of the bag totally gave out.



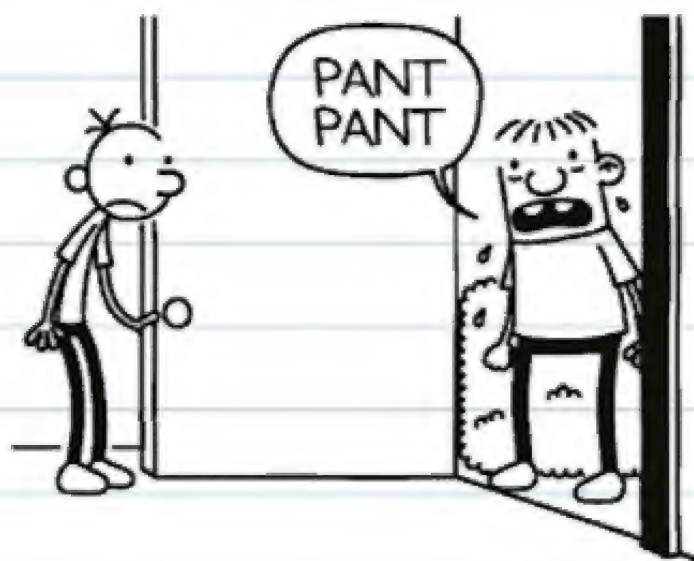
I stapled the bag shut and recovered as many chips as I could off the floor. But I kind of couldn't help myself, and a lot of them never made it back into the bag.



Now there was no WAY Mom wasn't gonna notice. I was already in enough trouble, and I really didn't need to add to my problems. So I called Rowley for help.

I told him my situation, and how I needed him to bring me as many chocolate chips as he could.

Rowley showed up at my front door five minutes later, and he was all out of breath. He said he would've gotten to my house SOONER, but the geese were out on our street and he had to cut through my neighbor's backyard to steer clear of them.

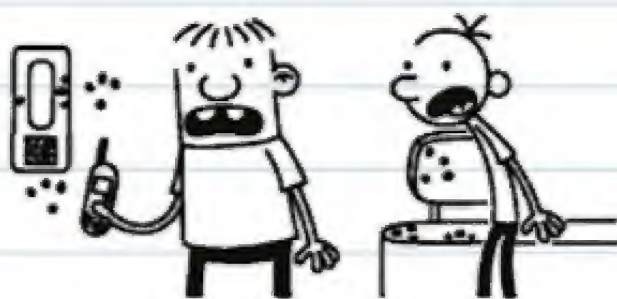


I asked Rowley for the chocolate chips, and he opened his hands. But they were useless because they were completely MELTED.

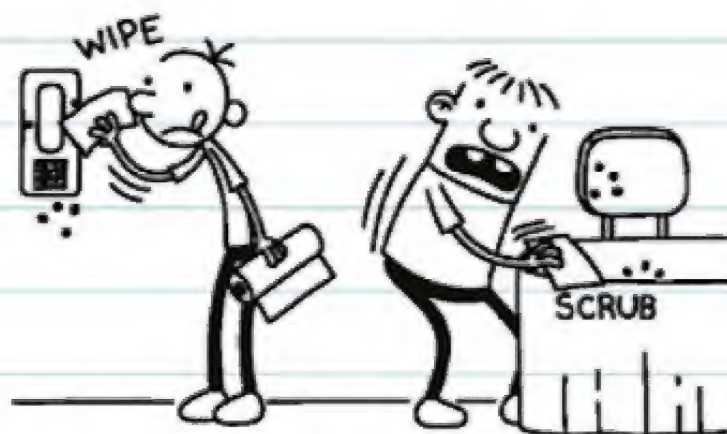


I told Rowley he was gonna have to go back and get MORE, but he said that was all they had. He said maybe he could call up Scotty Douglas down the street to see if HE had any chocolate chips, and that sounded like a pretty good plan to me.

But when Rowley picked up the phone, I noticed he was leaving chocolaty fingerprints EVERYWHERE.

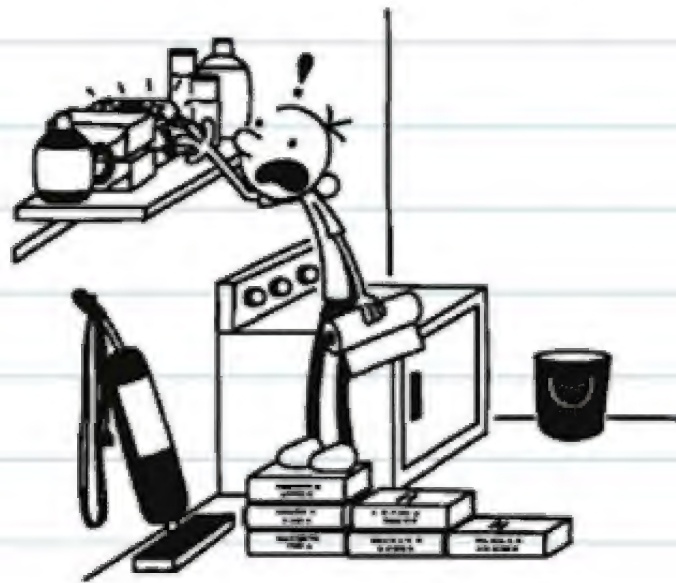


I knew if Dad found ONE of Rowley's fingerprints in the kitchen, I was dead. So we got some paper towels and started wiping down the whole kitchen.

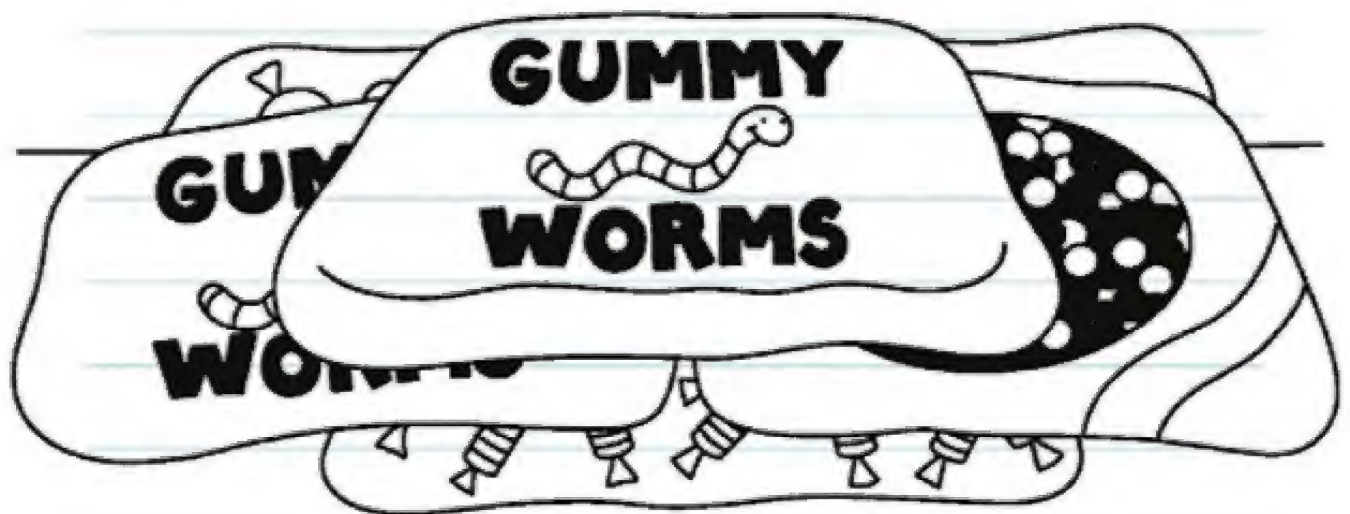


When we ran out of paper towels, I went into the laundry room to get some more. But when I did, I made a HUGE discovery.

I found Mom's entire stash of leftover Halloween candy tucked behind the rolls of paper towels.



There were five unopened bags in there, and it was ALL stuff I like.



I figured I'd give Rowley a few packets of gummy worms for helping me out with the cleanup. But I couldn't resist taking the opportunity to play a little prank on him first.

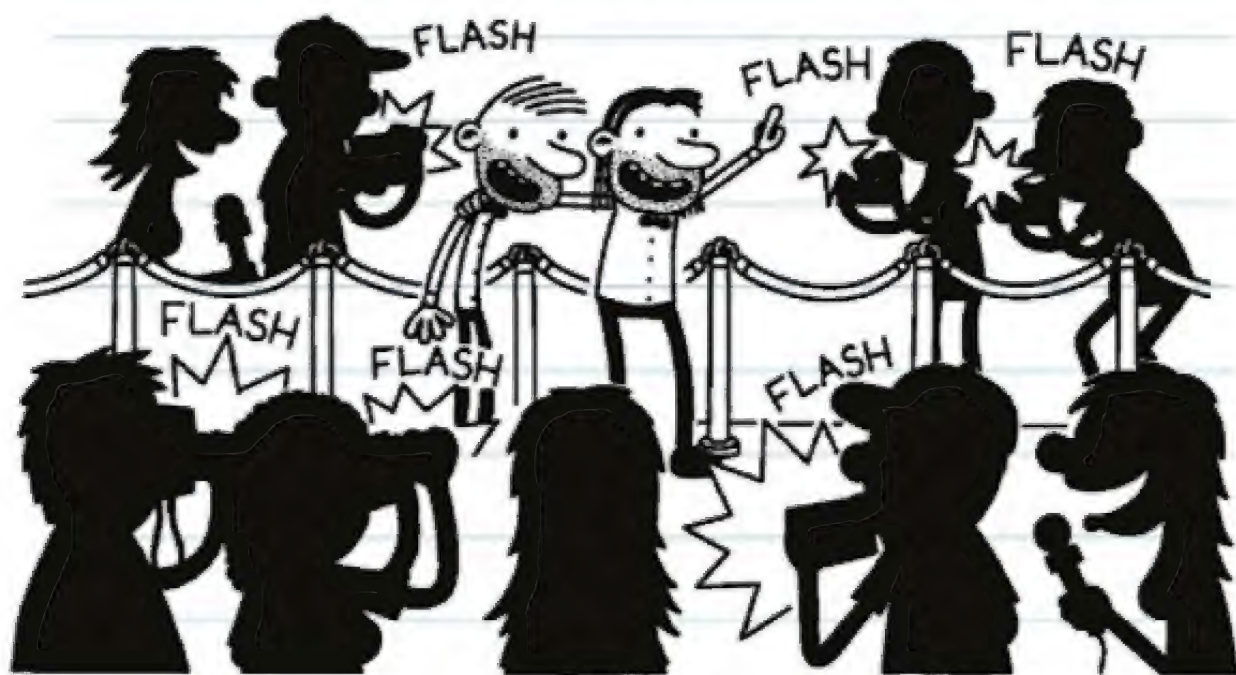


I thought Rowley would laugh, but he was TERRIFIED. Even AFTER I showed him the worm was just a piece of candy, he still couldn't get over it.



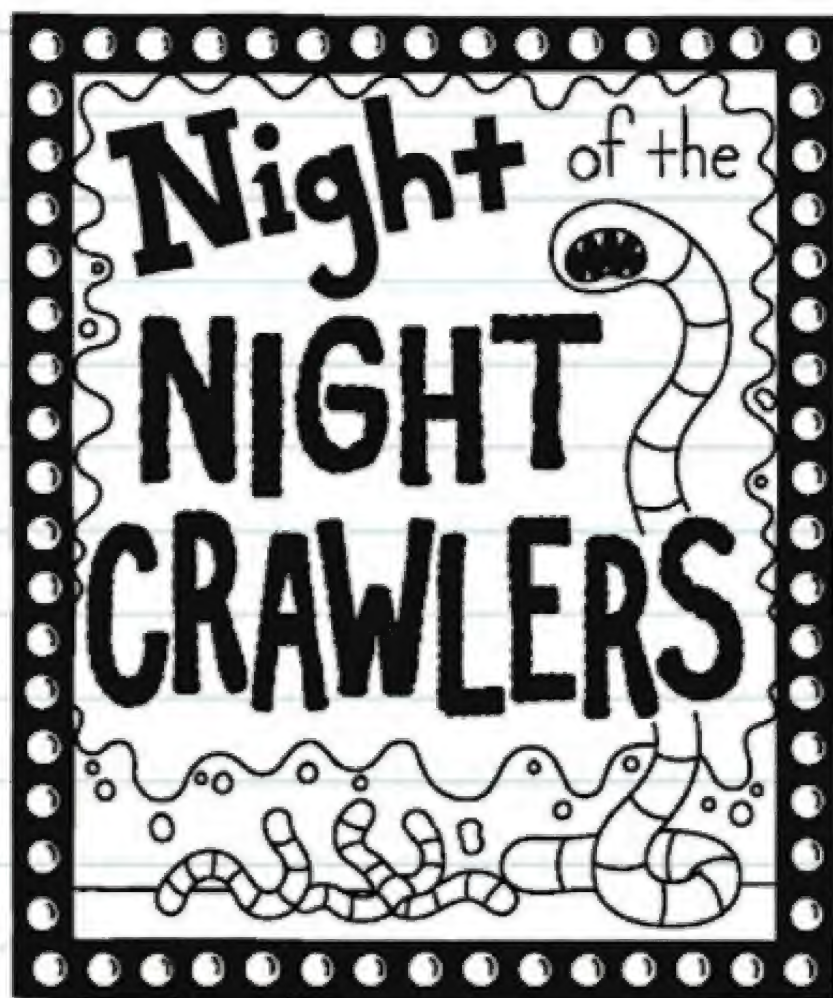
That's when a lightbulb went on over my head. People LOVE to be scared, and if you're good at it, you can make a FORTUNE. It can't be that hard, either. I.M. Spooky is filthy rich, and that guy doesn't even EXIST.

I heard about these college kids who made a horror movie, and they only spent a couple hundred bucks filming it. Then they sold the movie to a big studio, and now those guys are MILLIONAIRES.



If those guys could do it, so could I. And I didn't need hundreds of dollars, either. All I needed was a couple of bags of gummy worms and Mom and Dad's old camcorder.

I could already see the movie poster in my mind.

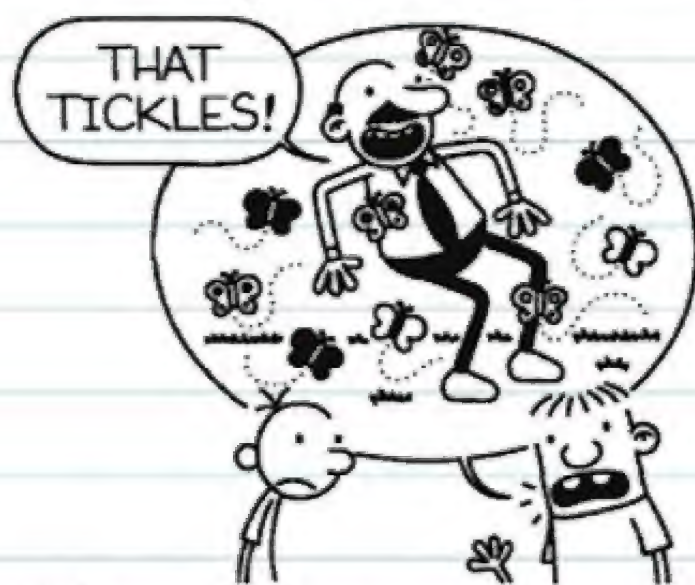


And when my movie wins Best Picture, I'll be sure to thank all the little people who helped me along the way.



The person who'll deserve the BIGGEST thanks is MOM. She's the one who's always saying I should use my imagination and do something creative, so when I'm a famous director I'll bet she'll be proud.

Before all THAT could happen, though, we needed to get started making this movie. I told Rowley my idea to make a film where man-eating worms terrorize a town, but that seemed to make him nervous. He said maybe we could switch out the worms for something less SCARY, like butterflies.



But I told him nobody was gonna pay good money to see a movie like THAT. I said we could have some funny parts so it wasn't JUST scary, and he seemed to warm up to the idea.

Rowley wanted to get started filming right then and there, but I told him we weren't doing anything without a SCRIPT. So we went upstairs, turned on my computer, and got to work.

NIGHT OF THE NIGHT CRAWLERS

Written by
Greg Heffley

Based on a concept by
Greg Heffley

Rowley said HE wanted to write, too, but I really didn't want to share credit on this thing since it was MY idea. So I told him he could do the storyboards, which are little drawings that show how each camera shot is supposed to look.

I figured a good way to start the movie would be to show a married couple having an ordinary day BEFORE the worms started attacking.

EVENING. A man comes home from work in a good mood, whistling a cheery tune. He opens the side door and steps inside the kitchen.



But I ran into a problem right away. I was planning on directing, and Rowley was our only actor. That meant we couldn't really show two characters on the screen at the same time.

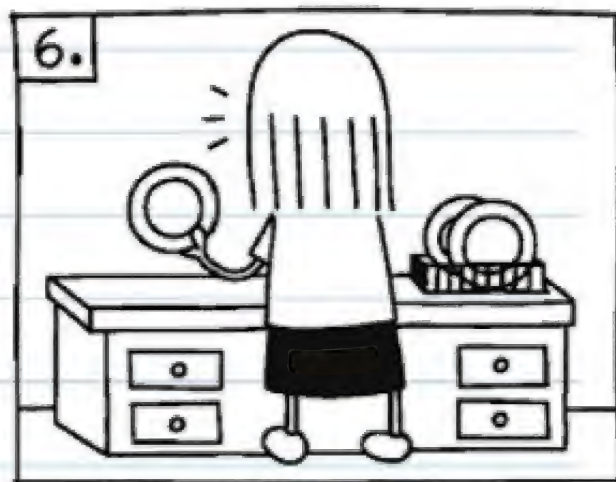
The other problem was that I didn't want it to be too obvious that Rowley was playing all the parts, or people might think our film was low-budget. So I had to get a little creative.

HUSBAND

Hi, dear. I am home
from work.

WIFE

Hello, honey. I hope you don't
mind if I don't turn around but
I am really concentrating on
doing these dishes.



HUSBAND

That's OK. I am gonna
go upstairs and take
a shower.

WIFE

Good, I can smell
you from here! (laughs)

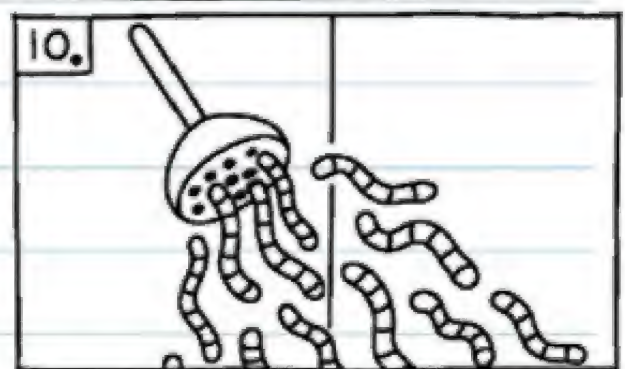
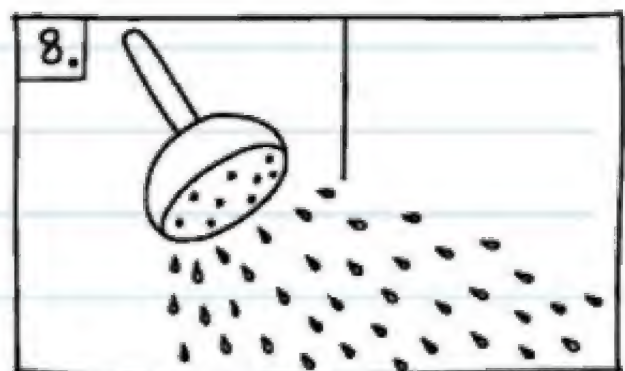
I felt like there was already a little too much talking, so it was time to get to the action.

UPSTAIRS BATHROOM. The man steps inside the shower and turns the water on.

HUSBAND

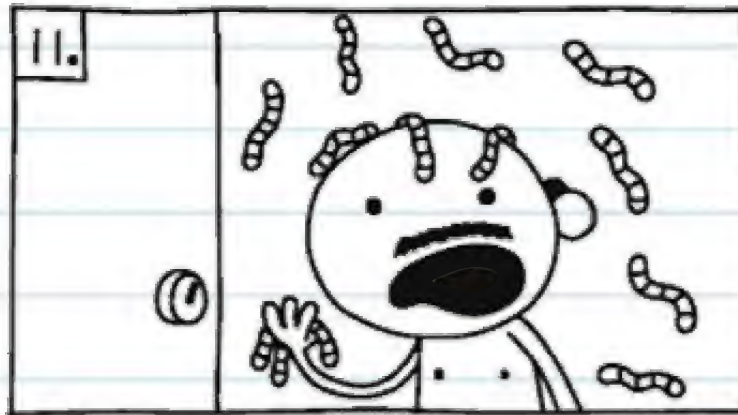
Oh, man! This shower
is gonna feel GREAT! And
my wife is right about
me stinking.

But then WORMS shoot out of the
showerhead!



HUSBAND

What the heck? This isn't
water! It's WORMS!

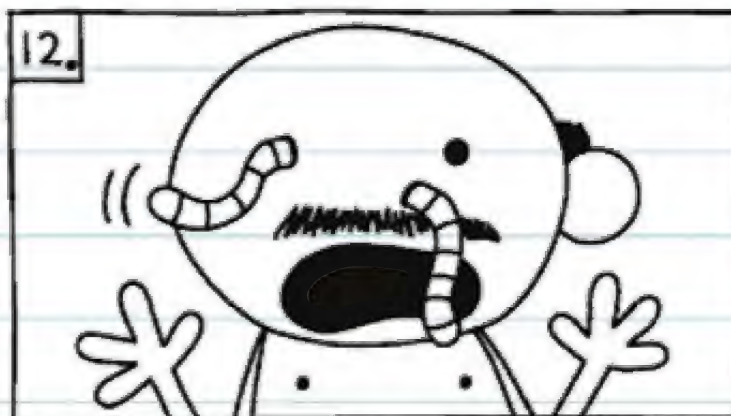


But these are no ordinary worms.
They are man-eating NIGHT CRAWLERS!

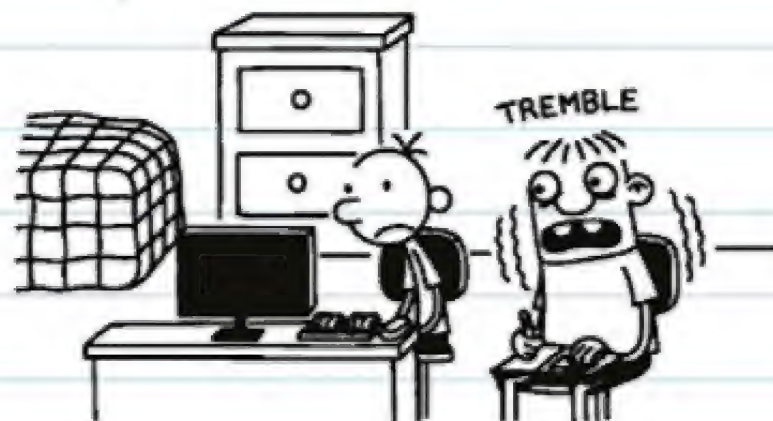
HUSBAND

Oh, great! These things
are actually EATING me!

Worms come out of the man's eyes and
nose.



When Rowley finished that last drawing, he was white as a ghost. But I reminded him the worms were just candy, and that calmed him down.



BACK TO THE KITCHEN. The man runs into the room with a towel around his waist.

HUSBAND

Honey! Don't use the
water! It's --

But it's TOO LATE. The woman is a skeleton.



Now I REALLY started to lose Rowley. I had to remind him this was all make-believe, and we had a plastic skeleton that we were gonna use for this scene. But he was practically hyperventilating.



I realized maybe this was a good place to add some comedy, so I put in a line of dialogue, and that brought Rowley right back.

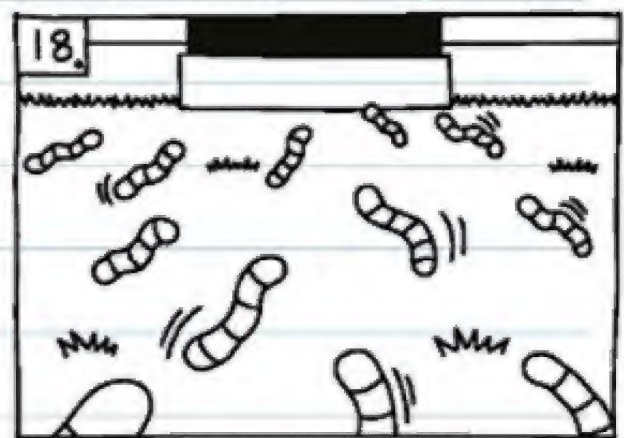
HUSBAND

Well, I guess this means I'm single! (winks)



After that was taken care of, it was back to the action. And the next scene was a BIG one.

The man looks outside. The house is totally surrounded by night crawlers.



HUSBAND

Oh no! I'm surrounded!

I'd better call the COPS!

The man puts the phone to his ear and dials 911.

HUSBAND

Hello, is this the police?

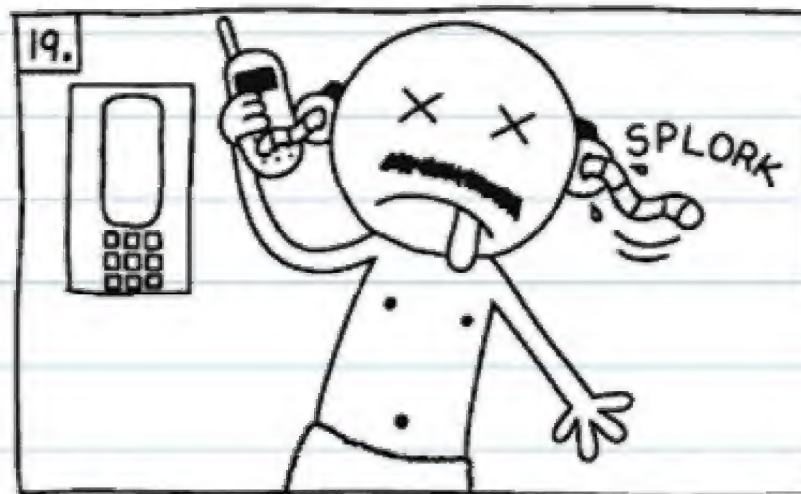
I am calling to report...

Wait, WHAT THE -- ?

A worm crawls from the phone into the man's ear and out the other one.

HUSBAND

AIIEEEEEEE! (dies)



After I finished writing that scene, I realized this was taking too much time. Plus, there were some scenes I hadn't figured out how to shoot yet, like the battle between the mayor and the 500-foot King Night Crawler at the end of the movie.

Since we weren't gonna get this whole thing done in one day, I decided we might as well get started and shoot the scenes we just wrote.

I found my parents' camcorder in Mom's closet, and luckily there was a film cartridge in the camera bag. We also borrowed some clothes from Dad's closet for Rowley's first costume, and even though the pants were a little long, they more or less fit.

We shot the opening scene, which took about three times longer than it should've because Rowley had trouble remembering his lines.



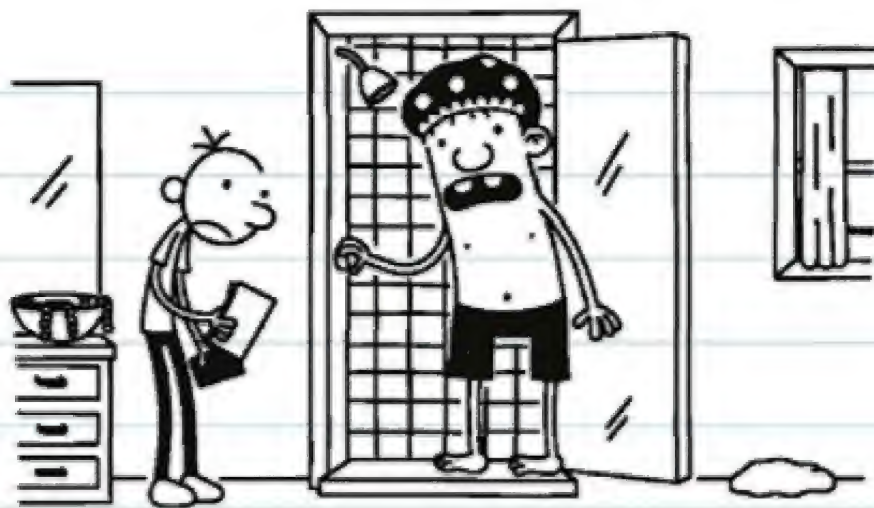
After that, it was time to film Rowley as the guy's wife.

Rowley wasn't comfortable wearing one of Mom's dresses, so we settled on some yoga pants. We didn't have a wig, so Rowley wore a hoodie to cover his head.

It wasn't exactly like I had imagined it, but sometimes you have to just keep things moving.

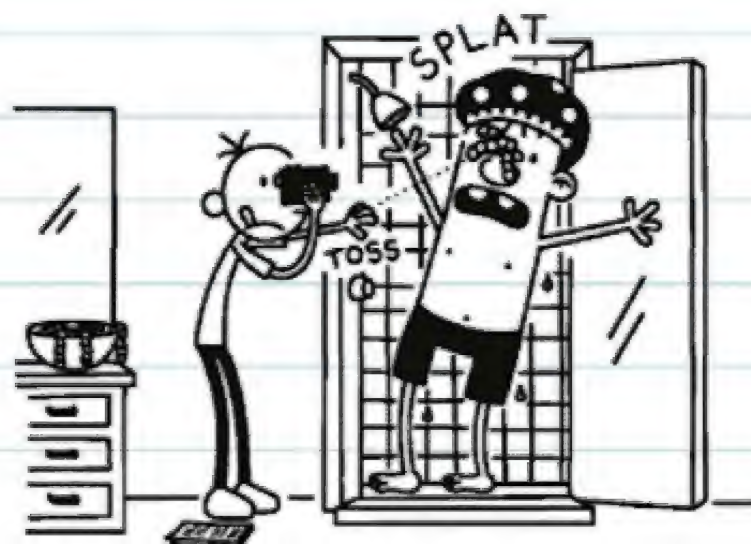


After we wrapped things up in the kitchen, we went upstairs to film the bathroom scenes. Rowley didn't want to get his hair wet, so he wore a shower cap we found underneath Mom's sink. I found Dad's bathing suit in one of his dresser drawers, and Rowley put that on and got in the shower.



It turns out the shower scene was A LOT harder to film than I expected. I had to shoot Rowley from the waist up so you couldn't see that he was wearing a bathing suit. Plus, I hadn't really thought through how to make it look like worms were coming out of the shower head, and nothing I did looked right.

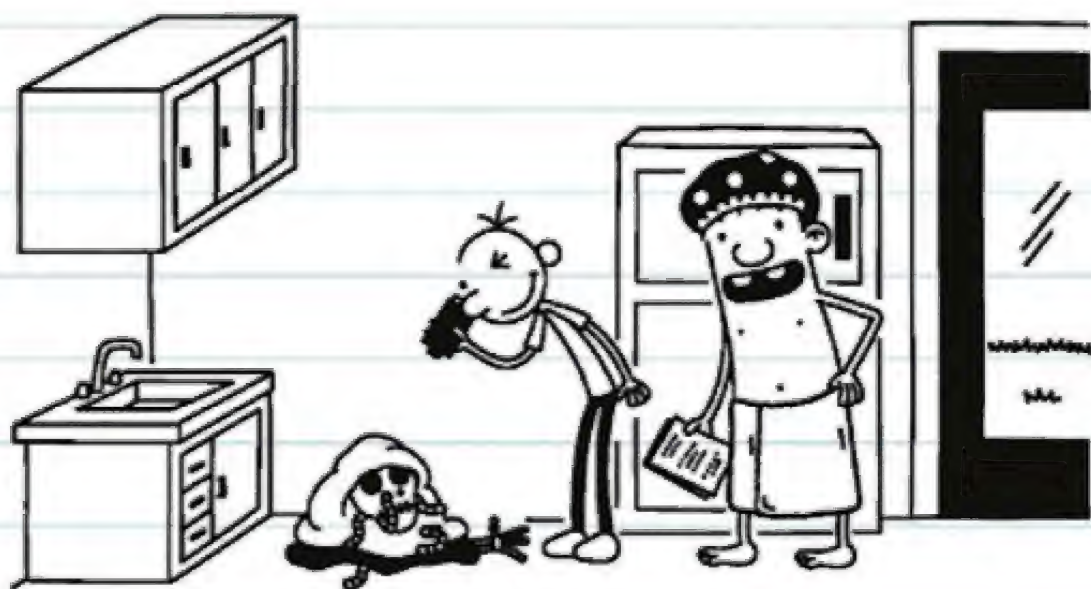
Eventually I settled on just throwing worms at Rowley's face. Hopefully it'll look realistic when it's all edited together.



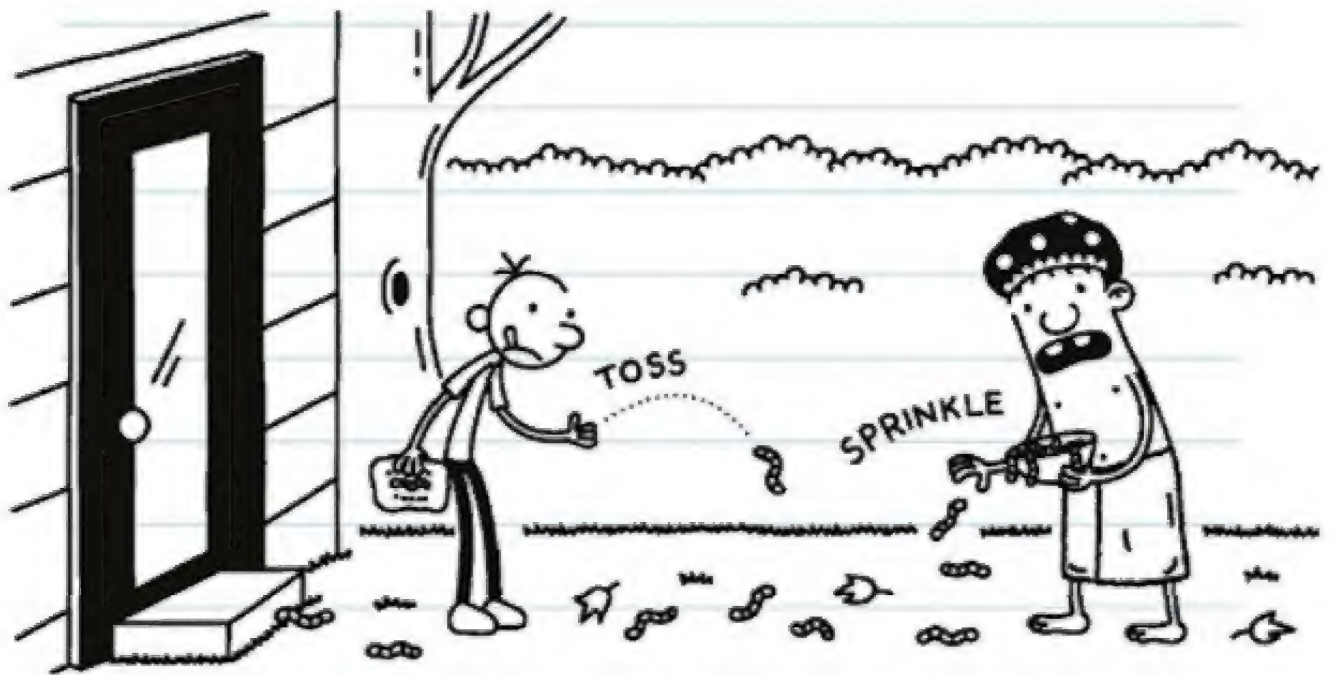
I couldn't find where Mom kept her food coloring, so we had to settle for some ketchup for the blood. It was a little too thick, but it wasn't the worst thing in the world, either.



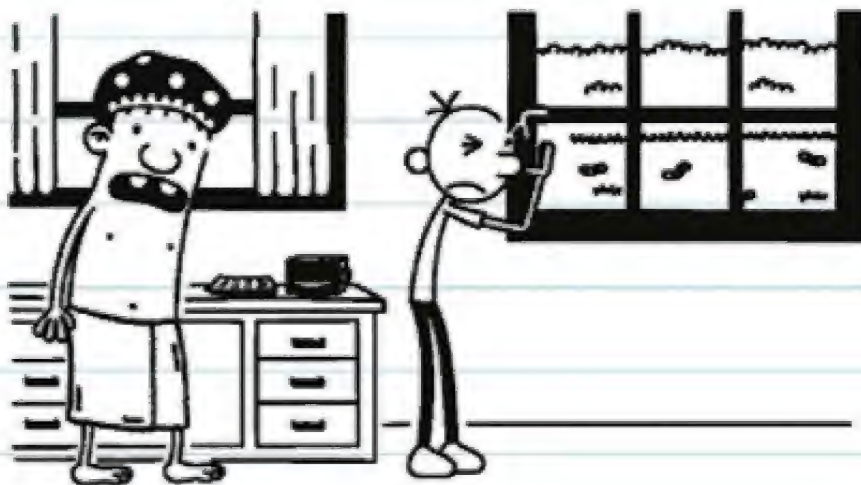
After we wrapped things up in the bathroom, it was time to go back down to the kitchen. We shot the skeleton scene pretty quickly, and the hoodie added something extra to it.



At this point it was getting a little late, and I was worried we weren't gonna finish shooting our scenes before my parents got home. So we hurried outside and got to work spreading the gummy worms around the yard.



But I wasn't satisfied with how this scene was coming out. There just weren't enough worms to make it look scary.



I decided we were gonna have to dip into the other bag of gummy worms to make the scene work. But when I opened the door to the laundry room, I got a nasty surprise.



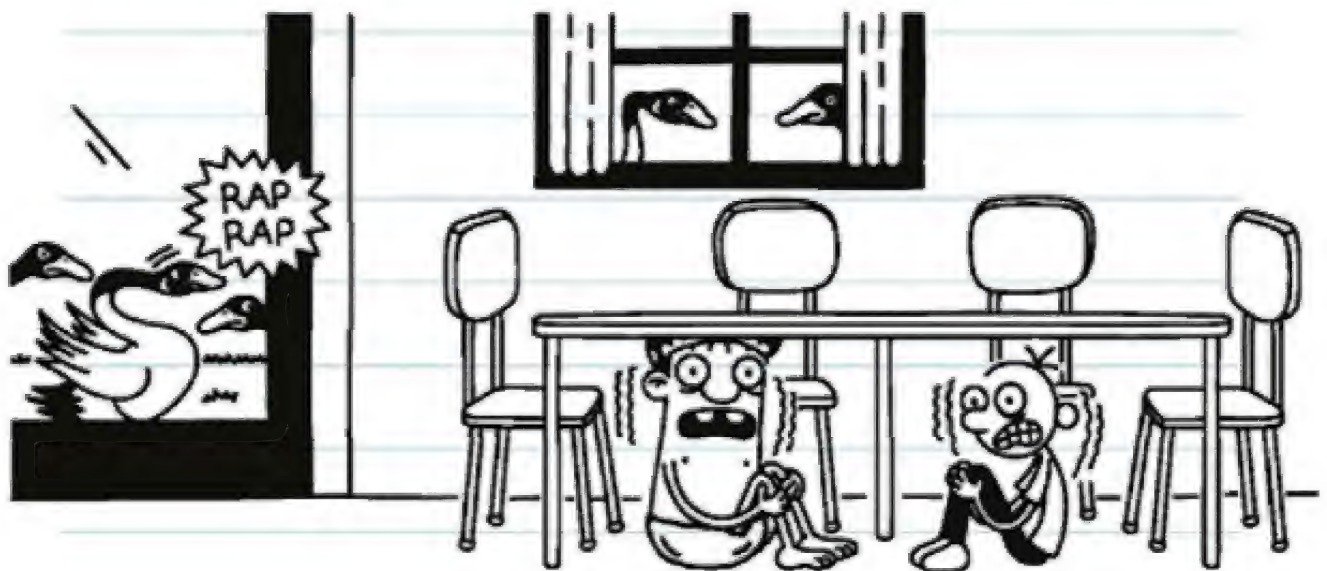
I was trying to figure out what to do with the pig when I heard Rowley screaming in the kitchen. So I ran out to see what was wrong.



A bunch of geese were going to TOWN on our gummy worms, so I opened the door to try to scare them off. But they wouldn't budge.



Once the geese finished off the gummy worms, they wanted MORE. I closed the door, and me and Rowley hid under the kitchen table to try to figure out our next move.



I told Rowley the only thing geese are scared of are other ANIMALS. But before I could say another word, Rowley was at the window with Manny's See-and-Talk.



Now the geese were pecking at the windows, and I was scared that if we didn't do something, they might actually break IN. That's when I remembered that the last time Rodrick went trick-or-treating, he wore this awful wolf mask, which was still down in the basement.



I figured if ANYTHING was gonna scare these geese off, it was THAT.

Me and Rowley ran down to the furnace room to find the mask. The old Halloween costumes were in a box on the fourth shelf, so it was a two-man job to get it down.

I got up on Rowley's shoulders and reached for the box, but when I DID I knocked a snow globe off the shelf. And when THAT happened, the WITCH went off.



I grabbed on to the shelf, and the whole storage unit came crashing down.



When the dust settled, we were both lucky to be ALIVE. Once Rowley got free, he shot out of the basement so fast, I think he might've actually taken the stairs FOUR at a time.

And once he got out of the house, Rowley didn't STOP. He climbed halfway up the big tree on the side of the house, and that's where I found him, babbling nonsense.

I tried to talk him into coming down, but he wouldn't budge. So I got a tennis racket and some balls and tried to KNOCK him down, but that only made him climb HIGHER.

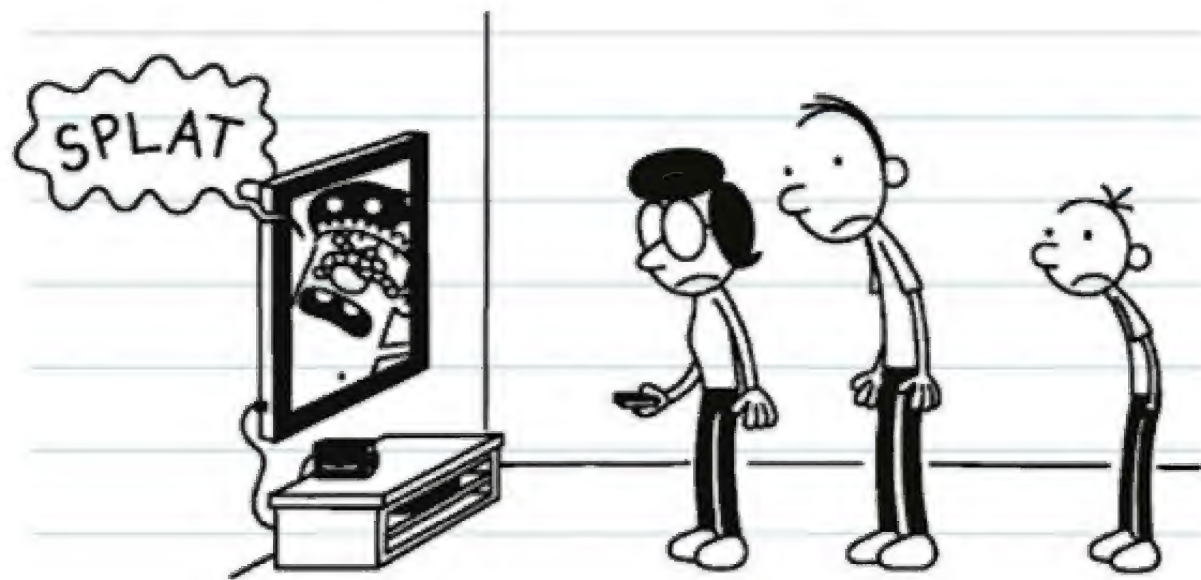
Unfortunately for me, that's the moment Dad came home.



Wednesday

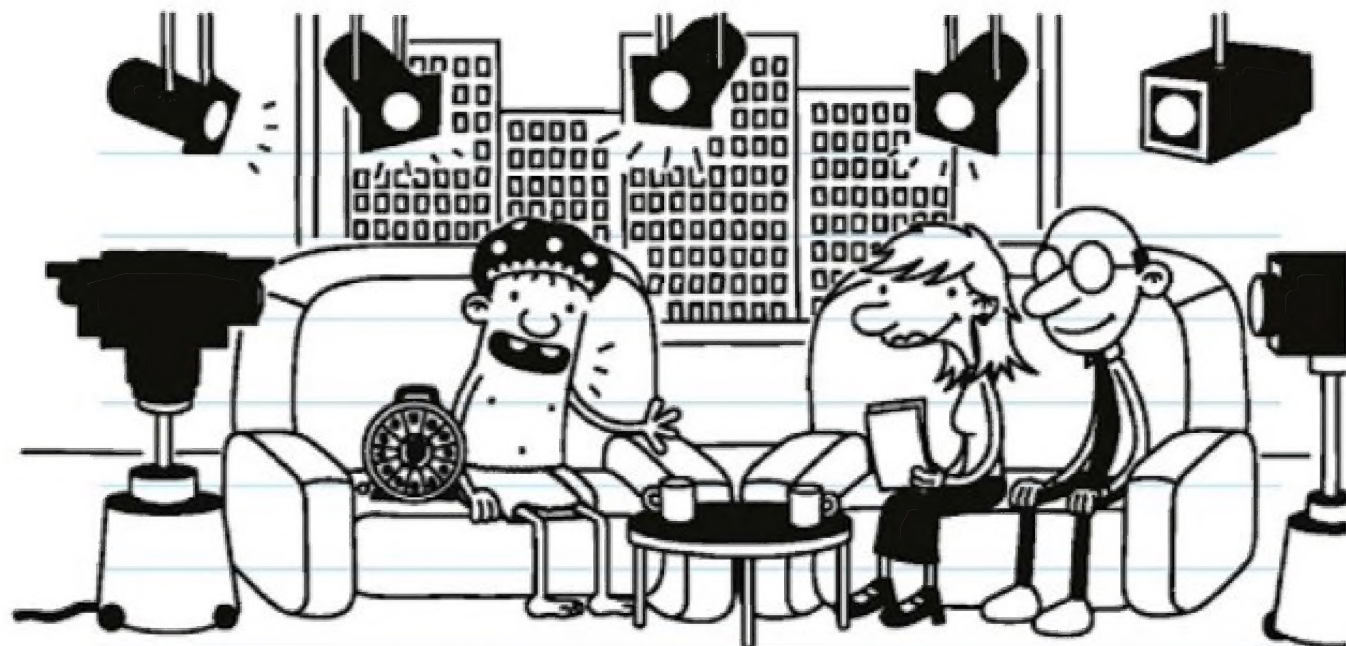
It's been a pretty crazy couple of weeks since me and Rowley made our movie. I've been too busy to keep up with my journal, because Dad has had me working in the furnace room every night sorting through all the stuff that fell off the shelves.

I tried explaining to Dad that we were just making a movie and things got out of hand, but it was like talking to a wall. I thought Mom would be a little more understanding, but it turns out the tape in the camcorder was of Manny taking his first steps, and we recorded right over it.



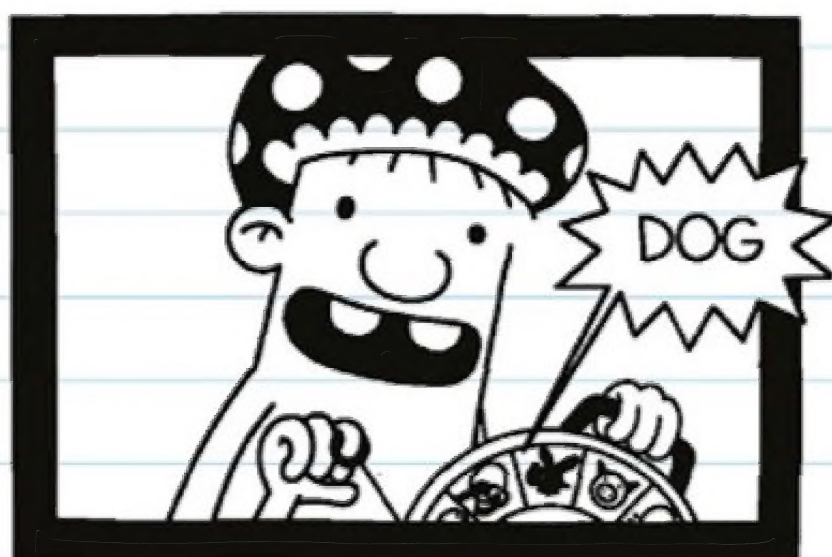
So I'm stuck cleaning up this mess in the furnace room, and meanwhile, Rowley is drinking in his newfound fame. A news crew came out and recorded the moment when the fire department got him down out of the tree, and the footage of the "dramatic rescue" spread like crazy.

Rowley hasn't even been back to school, because every morning talk show wants a piece of him.



What's really annoying is that in all these interviews, Rowley hasn't mentioned my name ONCE, even though I'm the one who MADE him famous. But these days he pretty much acts like the world revolves around him.

I guess that's what fame does to a person. All I can say is, you'd never see ME making a fool out of myself just to get a cheap laugh from the people watching at home.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks to all the Wimpy Kid fans for encouraging me to write about Greg Heffley and his crazy family. Thanks to my own crazy and wonderful family for doing the same.

Thanks to Charlie Kochman for sitting by my side and encouraging me to dig deep and write the best books I can. Thanks to everyone at Abrams, especially Michael Jacobs, Jason Wells, Veronica Wasserman, Chad W. Beckerman, Susan Van Metre, Robby Imfeld, Alison Gervais, Elisa Garcia, Samantha Hoback, Kim Ku, and Michael Clark.

Thanks to Shaelyn Germain and Anna Cesary for all of the support and hard work. Thanks to Deb Sundin and the staff at An Unlikely Story for making book lovers happy every day.

Thanks to Rich Carr and Andrea Lucey for your support and friendship. Thanks to Paul Sennott and Ike Williams for your invaluable advice.

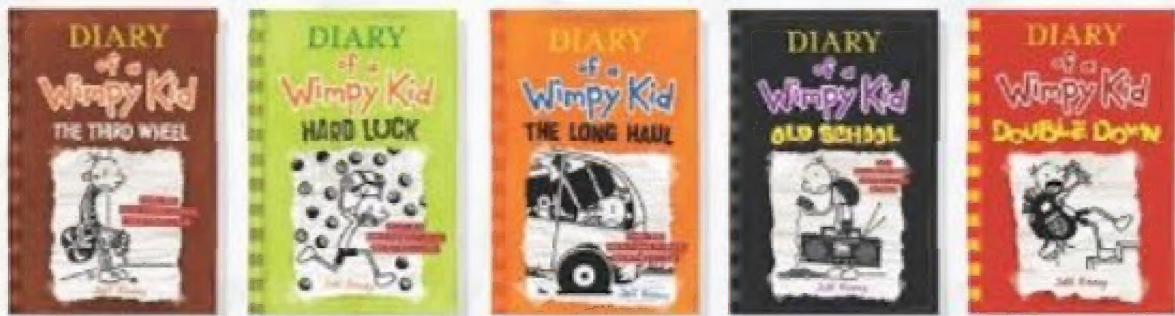
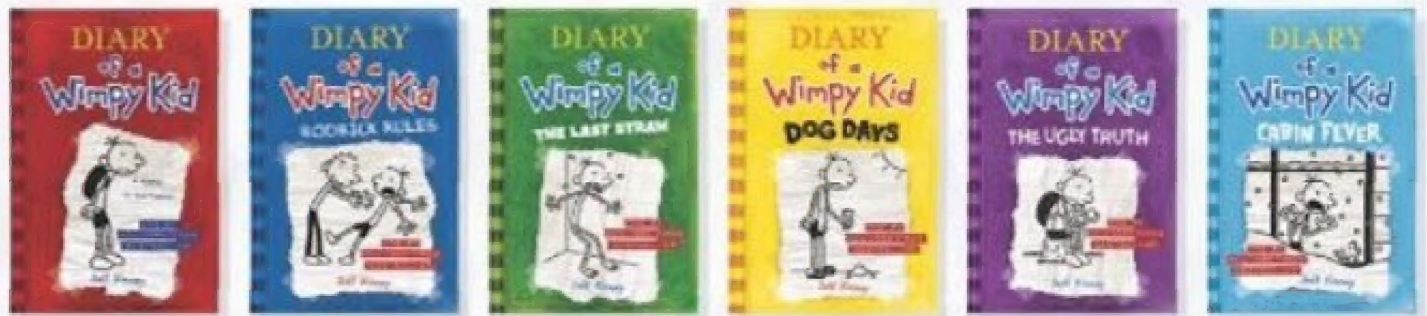
Thanks to Jess Brallier for cheering me on year after year. Thanks to everyone at Poptropica for your support and inspiration.

Thanks to Sylvie Rabineau and Keith Flee for helping me navigate the film and TV world. Thanks to everyone in Hollywood who is working to bring new Wimpy Kid stories to life, including Nina Jacobson, Brad Simpson, David Bowers, Elizabeth Gabler, Roland Poindexter, Ralph Milero, and Vanessa Morrison.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jeff Kinney is a #1 *New York Times* bestselling author and a six-time Nickelodeon Kids' Choice Award winner for Favorite Book. Jeff has been named one of *Time* magazine's 100 Most Influential People in the World. He is also the creator of Poptropica, which was named one of *Time* magazine's 50 Best Websites. He spent his childhood in the Washington, D.C., area and moved to New England in 1995. Jeff lives with his wife and two sons in Massachusetts, where they own a bookstore, An Unlikely Story.

Diary of a Wimpy Kid



ALL 11 AVAILABLE FOR DOWNLOAD NOW





The pressure's really piling up on Greg Heffley. His mom thinks video games are turning his brain to mush, so she wants her son to put down the controller and explore his "creative side."

As if that's not scary enough, Halloween is just around the corner and the frights are coming at Greg from every angle.

When he discovers a bag of gummy worms, it sparks an idea. Can Greg get his mom off his back by making a movie . . . and will he become rich and famous in the process? Or will doubling down on this plan just double Greg's troubles?

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